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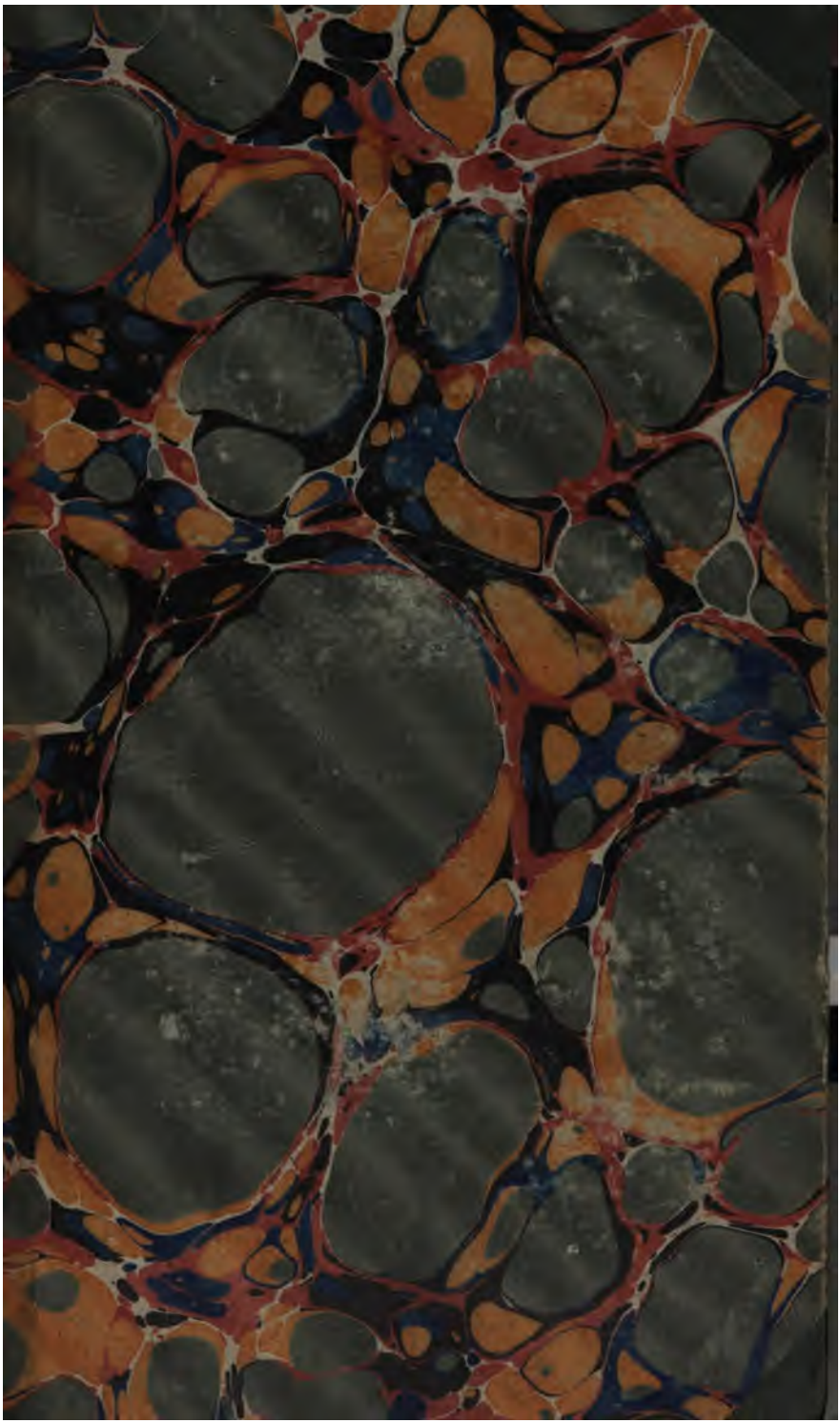

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MARRIED WOMEN.

CHAPTER I.

They stood in their young beauty, where the shade
Of kingly pines a deeper twilight made—
A girl, whose weeping eyes were downward bent,
A youth, whose whispers love made eloquent.

ANON.

THE day was done, the sun had gone down an hour before, and the bright harvest moon, rising above the old firs in the rectory garden, was steeping in silvery light the lawn and flower-garden, which extending below the

house, sloped down to the broad, green meadows that lay beyond the old-fashioned holly hedge at the bottom of the garden. The drawing-room windows, opening on the lawn, w re not closed, thanks to an unusually hot and sultry evening, and the lights within disclosed to view a happy group of young and smiling faces gathered round the table in the centre of the room, at which a middle-aged and somewhat portly dame was seated, book in hand. She was reading aloud, but the intonations of her voice would have betrayed, to an acute listener, that her thoughts had strayed far from the subject matter before her; indeed, at the most interesting part of the narrative, she paused abruptly, thereby eliciting sundry reproachful—"oh, mammas!" from her juvenile and interested auditors.

"Where is Di?" was the quick question that fell from her own lips, as she turned towards the eldest of her children. "I have not seen her since tea."

The fact was soon ascertained. Di was pacing up and down the gravel walk which terminated the garden.

"She has not been out before to-day; she said her head ached, and that she did not wish to come in till the children were gone to bed," replied a bright-looking little brunette, who thought her fourteen years elevated her far above all chance of being included in that undignified category.

Mrs. Gresham made no further remark; but the half sigh with which she resumed her occupation did not escape Mildred's watchful ears. Her mother might well look and feel anxious, for there was a world of strange emotions warring in the young heart and agitating the slight form, which, just at this moment, flitted past the windows. Step-mothers, now-a-days, are no longer harsh and cruel, as in tales of old, and it is not uncommon, as in the case before us, to find them loving their

predecessor's offspring almost as well and fondly as though they were their own.

The next moment, and the object of her solicitude stood within the room.

"Did you not hear the churchyard gate open?" asked the girl, anxiously.

Mrs. Gresham shook her head.

"It cannot be your father; it is hardly nine o'clock; he will not return before ten, if so soon."

She had hardly ceased to speak, ere Diana Gresham had passed out again into the open air. Her quick ear had caught sound of the opening of the wicket gate which separated the rectory grounds from the road; it might have been a belated labourer returning from his work passing through the churchyard, but none save friends would approach the house by that gate. She had not advanced many steps ere she paused abruptly, it was not her father, as she anticipated, but her cousin Lionel, who,

breathless alike with excitement and haste, had almost passed her, unperceived, as she stood beneath the shade, when the fluttering of her white dress betrayed her; albeit, she neither spoke nor moved.

A few words of greeting interchanged, and Lionel was the first to allude to a subject, which, to own the truth, was uppermost in the thoughts of both.

"I came down this afternoon with my father; I was determined to see you once more," began he.

"Once more!" echoed his fair companion, fairly startled out of the tranquillity of manner she had hitherto preserved, and turning upon him a face less remarkable for beauty of feature than for its peculiar and dreamy earnestness of expression.

They had, by this time, come out into the bright moonlight; and as, side by side, they moved slowly down the broad gravel walk,

Lionel fancied he saw something like tears glistening in his cousin's soft, grey eyes.

"You will not believe it, Di—you cannot believe that either my father or yours could be so cruel," said he, vehemently.

The fair girl said not a word, but Lionel perfectly understood the gesture by which she interrupted him to be one of rebuke.

"They do not understand me," proceeded he somewhat more temperately, but still eagerly. "They will neither of them believe I know my own mind, and they both say we are too young to marry yet. My father protests he will not hear even of our engagement, and tells me I have no right to tie you down by promises and pledges, but says, on the contrary, that we must wait—wait two long years—until I come of age—before the subject is renewed."

"Two years will soon pass," answered Diana in a voice that betrayed emotion, even while, with all the hopefulness of youth, she

strove to look on the bright side of the lot before her.

"Two years here might, perhaps, be quickly gone," was his emphatic rejoinder; "but not if, as my father insists, I am to spend them on the Continent—away from you—away from all and everything I care for. Oh! Di, even you must allow that it is too cruel."

Genuine tears filled poor Di's eyes now, though she would fain have concealed them; but her young lover was not satisfied until her face was turned towards him, and then all his anger against those who stood between their young loves, melted into fond solicitude for his betrothed, and with gently whispered words of love, and vows of eternal constancy, he strove to reassure her.

"How foolish of me!" said she at length with an effort at a smile, "but I have been worrying myself all day with an idea gleaned from uncle Stanford's letter, and papa seemed to think it by no means an

unreasonable objection on his part; indeed he said he himself felt it as such."

"What idea? what objection?" asked Lionel hastily.

"Our being first cousins; and that is an impediment which cannot be removed," answered Di with a faint blush stealing over her whole face.

Lionel looked grave.

"Ah! that, I verily believe, is my father's real reason for withholding his consent at present. Even for your sake, Di, he cannot altogether get over this prejudice; however, my mother has so far prevailed as to induce him to promise, that if at the end of two years we are both in the same mind, he will withdraw all opposition. And it is not very likely we shall change, Di; we, who have known and loved each other all our lives," added he in a tone of satisfaction, as he drew her arm still more closely within his own.

Di was of the same opinion, even if she did not express it quite so fervently, and Lionel was satisfied. The charm of his cousin's character lay in the transparent candour and sincerity of her nature; he knew and felt that her slightest word had far more depth and meaning than usually attaches to such protestations; meanwhile, he was not sparing in the expression of his own sentiments.

Diana Gresham was but seventeen, and it would have been strange had she not lent a willing ear to "the flattering tale" told by hope, and breathed by loving lips, when passing over the sad parting so near at hand, her cousin drew a bright picture of his return, and spoke of the happy days, and long life before them—of the time when they should meet to part no more on earth—of a blissful existence passed beneath the roof, she had, since childhood, looked on as a second home.

"It will be such a source of happiness

to my mother," said Lionel, who, carried away by his imagination, spoke as if the time of probation had already elapsed, and as if he and his young bride were on the point of being united and settled at Sutton Priors. "As long as I can remember she has wished for a daughter, and now, when she least expected it, she has got the very one she would have chosen, had it been in her power. My mother will not let you forget me, Di."

Di did not appear to consider that was a very probable contingency.

"You are more likely to cease to think about your country cousin, when you live among Italian Donnas and Duchesses," retorted she, while the glad light that shone in her eyes, and the smile that played around her rosy lips showed how little fear she felt of her words being ever verified.

Lionel's answer may very well be left to the imagination of the reader, and as it is uni-

versally allowed that the conversation of lovers is interesting only to themselves, we will not longer play the part of listener. Suffice it to say, that, when after the lapse of another half hour, Mrs. Gresham came out in search of her daughter, all traces of tears were gone, and smiles were again dimpling Di's softly rounded cheek. The good lady was not a little astonished to find that her daughter had a companion, though Lionel's presence at the Rectory was by no means an unusual occurrence.

"What, you here, Lionel?" exclaimed she, extending her hand; "I thought you were to remain in London with Lady Stanford."

Lionel explained that he had arrived with his father only half an hour before dinner.

"I carried that point, Mrs. Gresham; I was not to be talked into going abroad without coming down here to say goodbye. I knew my father's ultimatum, and finding that the Dean was disposed to side rather with him

than me, I thought I might as well leave them to talk over their rebellious children and come at once."

"Not very rebellious, I hope," said Mrs. Gresham, veiling the anxiety she still felt beneath a smile.

"Well, I think I should be very rebellious if Di would but support me," was the half playful, half desponding answer.

Di shook her head.

"Papa must know best, and from the first he said we ought to wait till we were both older and wiser," said she, in a low tone.

"Two years is a long time, is it not, Mrs. Gresham?" asked Lionel, who was a great favorite with his good-natured aunt.

"I do not think it very long, under the circumstances, for I have not forgotten that you are only nineteen, and Di nearly two years younger. Your father was more than twice as old before he thought of marrying."

"So he has told me at least a dozen times,"

began Lionel, impetuously; but a gentle pressure of the small white hand that lay upon his arm, restrained his ardour, and he concluded with—"you surely don't expect me to wait until I am forty? No, no, depend upon it, the moment I am twenty one, I shall come back and claim my bride; even my father has nothing to say against that."

"Well, yours is not a very hard case after all," said Mrs. Gresham, with a smile. "But I am afraid you will rank me among your enemies, when I tell you that, as it has struck ten, I am going to send you away."

Lionel begged to be allowed to come in and stay just a quarter of an hour longer, and when that was conceded, wished to remain until the Dean returned home. But this time Mrs. Gresham was firm.

"No, you must go now, Lord Stanford will wonder what can have become of you."

And, with some reluctance, her guest rose to take an unwilling farewell.

"By the way," said Mrs. Gresham, kindly, seeing that Lionel was hanging over Di's chair, and making a very long business of that little word 'goodbye.' "By the way, had you not better come to breakfast, to-morrow morning; if Lord Stanford goes back to London by the twelve o'clock train, he will have plenty of business with his steward, and will not want you. It will be time enough to say goodbye then. At least I suppose as the Dean knows you have been here this evening, there can be no objection to one more visit."

Lionel, of course, was but too delighted, though Mrs. Gresham had her misgivings lest she had been too good-natured, the more so that her husband, on his return, shook his head and said—

"Better not have asked the boy, much better not, all things considered."

She did not altogether repent of her kindness; however, when, from the school-room window, next morning, she saw Lord Stanford's carriage stop to take up his son. The Dean was at the gate talking to his brother; and Mrs. Gresham thought she had better go down and curtail adieux, which her own heart told her would any way be all too short.

In the hall she met Lionel, he was far too agitated to speak, he could only wring her hand in silence, and point to the drawing-room, where he had left Di. Poor Di! on whose young life, in one short week, the hope and glory of the fervent love of youth had dawned with all the bright effulgence with which the morning star of love shines in exalted and imaginative natures — dawned, speedily to be overcast and environed by clouds from earth, clouds which, now Lionel was gone, seemed so dark and gloomy, that even the fresh hopes of seventeen could hardly look beyond them to other—happier days.

If Mrs. Gresham, in her secret soul, accused Lord Stanford of cruelty, hardness of heart, and worldliness, in thus separating those, whom she considered "quite made for each other," she was prudent enough to abstain from expressing her opinion, in her attempts to console and comfort her step-daughter, whose very struggles to repress and govern her first overpowering emotion excited all Mrs. Gresham's warmest feelings of commiseration and anger.

"I have no patience with Stanford," said she to the Dean, the first time she found herself alone in her husband's presence. "I think he has acted with great want of consideration towards us, and towards Di in particular, of whom he professes to be so fond. It would have been all very well to say to his son 'wait—you are really too young to marry just yet,' but I do think to send Lionel abroad, and to prohibit all correspondence between the cousins, is a very harsh and most unnecessary measure."

The Dean smiled at his wife's eagerness, though he answered, gravely enough—

"I am grieved for Di's sake; but I do not blame Stanford, though, perhaps, he has been somewhat more stringent in his restrictions, than we consider quite necessary. A marriage between cousins is never altogether desirable; and, under the circumstances, my only regret is, that Lionel ever broached the subject to Di; if he had spoken first to his father, as it would have been only right for him to have done—for he asserts he has been seriously thinking of the matter for upwards of a year—she would have been spared all this uncertainty and miserable suspense. Indeed had I had the least idea of their mutual attachment, I should never have allowed Lionel to be always at the house; but I never entertained the smallest suspicion that they looked on each other as anything more than brother and sister."

"I did not expect any such result," said Mrs. Gresham; "but, now I come to think of it,

it is the most natural occurrence in the world."

"Natural enough," said the Dean, with something like a sigh; "but not very satisfactory. I never knew any good come of these early attachments. With a girl of more phlegmatic and equable temperament, there might not possibly be so much cause for anxiety; but if anything should happen—any obstacle arise now, I should dread the effect on Di's deep and sensitive feelings."

"But I thought Lord Stanford had promised that if they remained constant during the two years, his consent should be freely given."

"True, but that *if* stands very stiff."

"You do not doubt Di?" said Mrs. Gresham; "and I am sure I never saw anything equal to Lionel's devotion."

"Ah! there it is. I know as well as you do, Di's earnest nature. She is not likely to forget. Each day this affection will twine itself more and more closely round her heart.

She will love her cousin the better in that she thinks his father has been somewhat harsh to him, and that for her sake. I do not expect *her* to change. Now Lionel is the very reverse in character and disposition; quick and impulsive in all his feelings, I much doubt their being lasting."

"I really think you are mis-judging Lionel," interposed Mrs. Gresham; "from a child his affection for us, and for Di in particular, has been unchanged."

"So you would have me believe he has been in love with Di ever since he was five years old," said the Dean drily. "I know Alicia thinks so; however, let that pass. All I mean is, that hitherto Lionel has been very little in ladies' society; owing to his mother's health, from year's end to year's end, there have been no ladies, save a few country neighbours, seen within the walls of Sutton Priors; while Stanford has purposely, and I think wisely, kept him out of London. He always

said his son should not run the chance of being *blasé*, and wearied of himself and everything about him, before he was out of his teens; and I agree that there was great wisdom in not thrusting him into the vortex of the world, until he was old enough, in some measure, to discriminate between good and evil."

"I do not see what this has to do with Di," interrupted Mrs. Gresham; who was not an acute reasoner.

"I was coming to that," said the Dean, with a quiet smile; "and, to be brief, what I mean and what I fear is this: Lionel knows no young ladies but his cousins; Di is vastly improved of late, and, without vanity, I think I may say she is now a remarkably handsome and attractive girl. To me, therefore, it is not surprising he should fancy himself in love—"

Mrs. Gresham looked the contradiction her husband did not give her time to express.

"You think I am wrong; you believe it is more than fancy. It is very likely, and I only

hope I may prove mistaken. Still, without injustice to Lionel, I think it more than probable that when he has seen more of the world, he may think fit to change his mind; he may not wish to marry and settle down quietly at twenty-one; or he may possibly meet some other young lady he likes better."

Mrs. Gresham would not allow that any one of these contingencies were either probable or possible; and, having stated his opinion, the Dean did not seem disposed to argue the point, but closed the conversation by saying—

"Well, well, we shall see; time will show. Meanwhile I am very glad Frank is coming down on Saturday; her brother's presence will give a happier turn to Di's thoughts, and prevent her dwelling on a topic, which I fear may prove but too engrossing. By the way, my dear, though I would not for the world you should check Di's confidence, it would be as well if you do not encourage her in talking too

much of her cousin. The less said about the matter, now, the better."

Leaving our heroine awhile to learn, as best she may, the first great lesson of every woman's life—patience, endurance, and quiet submission to the will of others—it may be as well that we should take a cursory view of those antecedents, which led to the events, with which our narrative has opened.

CHAPTER II.

The past and present here unite,
Beneath Time's flowing tide;
Like footprints hidden by a brook,
But seen on either side.

LONGFELLOW.

LORD STANFORD and the Dean of C—— were brothers, and as closely knit by the bonds of affection, as they were by the ties of consanguinity. They had both begun life with but an indifferent chance of attaining the honoured positions they now respectively held. Ultimately, however, and more than twenty years before our story begins, the elder of them had succeeded to his title, on the death of an uncle, the legality, or rather the illegality, of whose marriage had always been to his relatives so

doubtful that the expectations they might otherwise have indulged in, were always put aside as chimerical and delusive. Nevertheless, when, after years of seclusion, the old lord died, his last will and testament put the matter beyond a doubt. Lionel Gresham became Baron Stanford. Almost his first act was to present his brother Robert with the living of Sutton; whose former rector only survived his patron two months; and not long after both brothers married.

The rectory was not more than half a mile from the "Great House;" for so the country people called the new stucco-fronted, staring, white mansion, which the late lord had seen fit to erect within a stone's throw of the old Priory, whence the estate and mansion of Sutton Priors took its name. And it was not surprising that, from the time he was four years old, Lionel Gresham the younger should prefer spending the greater part of the day at the rectory with his cousins, Frank and Diana, to

the solitary grandeur of his own nursery, for Lionel was an only child.

The first ten years of their existence—albeit, marked by the advent of a handsome, though no longer very young step-mother—sped merrily and easily enough for the rector's children; the next brought with them an infinity of changes, the principal of which it is incumbent upon us to record, in that they had all more or less effect on the future life and character of our heroine.

We pass over the birth of some half-dozen younger brothers and sisters; these several arrivals, albeit an occasion of unmingled rejoicings to the community inhabiting the nursery, brought with them no small share of anxiety for their parents. Though tolerably well off now, Mr. Gresham could not altogether forget that his large family were but insufficiently provided for. He himself had no private fortune to bestow on his elder children, and his second wife's dower would not amount

to more than a thousand pounds a piece when divided equally among her own offspring. As matters stood, therefore, it was a most welcome change which made him Dean of C——, and this preferment was not the less valued in that it was quite unexpected.

The Premier of those days had been down on a visit to Lord Stanford, at Sutton Priors; he had known both the Greshams at college, and it was a pleasant surprise to him to find that his old friend, whom he had lost sight of, and who had been buried in the country for the last five-and-twenty years, was none the less talented and agreeable for his long seclusion. Mr. Gresham was not the man to allow his mental powers and faculties to rust and decay in inaction, though lost in the depths of an essentially rural neighbourhood. As far as books were concerned, he lived in the world, if not of the world, and he could tell a story, and quote Juvenal and Horace with all the

pithy wit and appropriate terseness which had animated his youth.

This was not all; with none of that striving after-effect which marks but too many of our modern divines, it would have been difficult to find a better managed parish than that of Sutton throughout the length and breadth of the land. The old church had been restored and beautified, but thanks to the rector's influence over his brother, there had been no appeals "to the wealthy and benevolent," no entreating, no begging for that charity which should be spontaneous and unasked; and what was better still, thanks to his own individual exertions, the church was well filled by a happy contented people. Schools, and clothing-clubs, a savings' bank, and a dispensary had been established long before rival religious parties had either thought of, or claimed the credit of inventing such aid and assistances to the poorer classes in large and populous districts.

These were the causes which led to Mr. Gre-

sham's being made Dean of C——, a distinction which caused some regret to his children, who at this period were hardly of an age to appreciate such a tribute to their father's merits ,and who thought they could not possibly be happy or enjoy existence, save and except at Sutton Rectory; they, therefore, by no means rejoiced in the prospect of residing for some months every year in a close and stuffy cathedral town.

Good fortune, or what is vulgarly termed "luck," seldom comes alone. Just at this epoch, Miss Courtenay, sister of Mr. Gresham's first wife, of whom more anon—received a considerable accession of wealth and consequence. Despite some very feminine faults—with which we may become better acquainted hereafter—the maiden lady was both kind-hearted and generous, and she did not hesitate instantly to proclaim her determination of "doing something" for her deceased sister's children. Ere long it was very generally understood that Frank would eventually be her heir, and what

was perhaps at the present moment quite as acceptable, she signified to the Dean her intention of taking upon herself, from henceforth, all the expenses of his education and maintenance.

Meanwhile, though nothing was said about providing for Diana, Miss Courtenay, could she have obtained her father's consent, would gladly have taken the little girl to reside under her own roof. This arrangement, for many reasons, did not meet with the Dean's approbation; he would not hear of parting with his child, so that young lady only profited by her aunt's riches so far that she went on a visit to Miss Courtenay twice in every year, for the sake, it was said, of masters, and on each occasion returned home a good deal spoiled and very gaily clad. The fine clothes were soon torn to shreds, for, to her shame be it spoken, in the days of her youth, Miss Di's pranks and sports—out of sympathy with her sworn allies, Lionel and Frank—were of rather

a masculine kind, thereby incurring much obloquy from the nurse-maids concerned in the repairing of the said habiliments. And as to the spoiling, it was not perhaps very serviceable, but Di was blessed with an affectionate disposition, a tender conscience, and a strong sense of justice; so no great harm was done.

The Dean saw all this, nor was he slow in perceiving that—thanks to the share he had taken in her education—at fifteen his daughter was far superior in talent and character to her step-mother. Mrs. Gresham had an abundance of common sense, and many sterling qualities, but she was neither clever nor accomplished, so when Miss Courtenay bethought herself of sending Di to a finishing school, her father most gladly acceded to the plan.

At seventeen, accordingly, Di came home, with the heart and impulses of a girl hidden beneath the polished manners and attractive graces of an embryo woman of the world.

School is neither more nor less than a miniature world, and Di's intuitive tact had led her to play her part well on this petty theatre for action, while her high spirit and innate refinement of mind had happily preserved her from most of the evils incident to that mode of education.

Lionel, whose career at Eton necessarily ended much about this time, spent all that winter at Sutton Priors. His cousin Frank, who was two months his senior, thanks to Miss Courtenay, her interest, and her income, was the happy possessor of a commission in her Majesty's Foot Guards, and Lionel ever led by those with whom he was thrown, would gladly have entered not only the same profession, but the same regiment. Lord Stanford thought otherwise; he would have preferred his son's going to College; and when Lionel showed himself entirely averse to this plan, the idea of sending him abroad was first originated.

The interregnum before anything was settled, Lionel—who had his own views as to the

future—passed, greatly to his own satisfaction, hunting, and shooting, and spending all the frosty or wet, and not a few of the fine days too, at the rectory; where, indeed, when early in the spring, Lord and Lady Stanford went to London, he quite took up his abode. It never struck anybody that the cousins, who had never been separated for more than six months of their joint lives, were likely to fall in love. Those sort of suspicions never suggest themselves to those in authority until it is too late. Indeed, one would think the proverb touching the stable door and stolen steed had never been enunciated by some sage, who understood the weaknesses of humanity. At any rate, neither Lord Stanford or the Dean, as we have shown, profited thereby.

It is an extraordinary fact, but none the less true, that love, marriage, death, which, after all, are the most natural contingencies in the world, and the last certainly the most inevi-

table, are events for which, even the oldest and wisest amongst us, seldom hold themselves prepared. As for death, we are logically aware we cannot live for ever, yet, despite alike of all practical warnings, and of the thunders of pulpit eloquence, most of us, like the rich man in the parable, lay the flattering unction to our souls, that we shall at least live "many years."

Let that pass; this is not the place for a discourse on the mortality of man, or the immortality of the soul; wherever else sermons are to be found, they have no place in a novel. Love and marriage are far more appropriate themes, though nineteen people out of twenty would, if asked, say, they are topics on which the young had better not dwell. Very well, it may be all very right and proper that the Dianas and Lionels of real life should not indulge in vain imaginations or idle dreams; and if threadbare jests on matrimony, and its antecedents, were for ever banished fro.n

polite society, it would be better still. But what is most astonishing, is, that save and except some few worldly people, with whom a good establishment for their daughter is the great end and aim of her education—fathers and mothers never seem to think it probable that their children will marry. They have indeed a sort of vague idea, not much better authenticated than that entertained by every boy and girl, that people marry, and are given in marriage. As they themselves have been united in holy wedlock, it is but courteous—we own it is stretching a point—to suppose that they themselves have been in love; and yet how few, even of the best and kindest of parents, take any steps to avert that fate which is so common—so much too common—an unfortunate attachment!

And so it was with the Greshams, as in hundreds of other instances. They were cousins; this was the hitherto little considered objection; and having laid his embargo on

their marriage, Lord Stanford thought he had only done his duty, even if he felt any misgivings as to his share in the past, he was of far too reserved and taciturn a nature to express any such feelings.

This was not the case with the Dean. The first surprise over, and that it was a surprise he took no small blame to himself, he was full of regret and remorse for a past that could not be obliterated. He could not forget that the future of two young lives hung in the balance, and that the happiness most imperilled was that of his favourite daughter and best-loved child.

Life passes with us all, and day by day slipped calmly by at Sutton Rectory, until the two years of probation were almost gone. Though separated from one her heart held most dear, our heroine, the first sharp pang of parting over, had not been actually unhappy; Lionel's absence caused indeed a blank in her existence, accompanied by a sense of loneli-

ness, which she had never known before. And now, like many another dreaming imaginative girl, cast back upon herself, she lived in a future of her own creating. Life lay before her, an ideal life indeed, whose golden threads, viewed through the medium of her own bright fantasies, glowed with all the vivid hues of inexperience and romance. What did she know of all the sordid cares, the falsehood, the selfishness, and the sin which makes this world so dark and dreary? They came not near to mar the imaginary scenes, and noble characters, the thrilling feelings and sublime aspirations which filled and occupied both head and heart.

Still these two years had not been withou their trials. It would have been hard to say which, at first, was the most difficult to bear; Lord Stanford's cold and measured scrutiny whenever his son's name was mentioned in her presence, or Lady Stanford's sympathetic looks and glances on the same occa-

sions; for though her lord had forbidden her to speak openly, his mother took care that Di should hear of all Lionel's sayings and doings, and read every one of his letters. It was stern schooling at first to dine twice or three times a week at Sutton Priors, and sit straight opposite her lover's picture, that picture whose eyes seemed always on her, move wherever she would.

It was strange when Lord Stanford's sporting friends came down, later in the autumn, to hear them speak to her of Lionel, as though he were a person in whom she felt no especial interest, and listen to their wonder at "Stanford's" having sent him abroad—an only son—instead of doing this or that. Diana Gresham bought her experiences of these petty annoyances dearly enough, but she eventually came, as most people do, to reason herself into enduring them with fortitude, if not with indifference; that was the work of time; but one thing she could not, and she would

not, learn to endure, namely, that admiration which men of the world too often think they are at liberty to testify towards every girl who happens to please their fancy, or captivate their senses. The Mr. Tooks and the Mr. Crooks, the neighbouring squirearchy and clergy, however much they might admire her, soon came to be impressed by a sense of Miss Gresham's superiority; but it was not so easy to teach young lordlings their proper place. The "good matches" and middle-aged beaux could not readily believe that they did not enjoy the prescriptive right and privilege of whispering soft nothings into the ear of the only young lady of the party. Di's careless, natural manner was peculiarly attractive to men, whom every little Miss who wanted an establishment or a husband, had striven to please; she did not care for their attentions, so they were, perhaps, the more ready to offer them. She did not choose to be the subject and recipient of idle compliments and senti-

mental nonsense, and some young ladies of our acquaintance might have learnt a useful lesson, had they seen the quiet, reserved manner which she soon learnt was the best shield against conventual impertinence.

It was this practical experience of the difficulties of her own position which made Di resolutely withstand the temptations of a season in London. Like other girls, dancing, dress and gaiety had their allurements for her, and ever since she was ten years old Miss Courtenay and herself had conjointly built castles touching that great event—her *dèbut.* Her presentation dress had been talked over and decided on while she still wore frocks and frilled trowsers. Now all this was put an end to. The reality of Diana Gresham's eighteenth summer proved far different from these brilliant anticipations, and when just a year after Lionel's departure, Miss Courtenay's long-meditated and formal letter of invitation came; it was not the Dean who, as she half

expected, demurred as to the expediency thereof. That epistle—so at least its inditer believed—was very astutely worded:—"It would be better for her dear niece to see something of the world before her fate in life was irrevocably fixed, &c., &c." But it did not touch the mark. The Dean handed the letter across the breakfast table to his daughter.

"It concerns you more than me, Di."

Her cheek flushed as she read it, but she folded the missive and returned it without a word of comment. Her resolution was taken; though she could not speak with half a dozen pair of eyes gathered round the table.

An hour later as she was coming in from the garden, with her hands full of double violets, she met her father.

"I must answer your aunt's letter, before I go to the vestry, Di; what day shall we fix for your journey to London?"

"I do not wish to go at all papa."

"Eh! what?" ejaculated the dignitary of the church, somewhat more hastily than was his wont.

"I had rather not go," repeated Di in some trepidation. "I do not want to pass the season in London."

She did not raise her eyes to his face, or she might have read the pleasure even a suspicion of her intention gave her father.

"Why Di, that is something quite new; I thought you and your aunt had settled this long ago."

"Yes, papa; but—" and Di stopped short.

"Aye, I must hear that but," said the Dean, finding she was not likely to proceed.

For once in her life Di was at a loss for an answer, because, forsooth, she could not bring herself even to allude to her attachment to Lionel.

"I do not wish to go," repeated she.

"That is hardly a reason, Di," said her

father in an amused tone, which reassured her. If it came to jesting she knew she should get her own way. What woman wants more?

"I have seen enough of the world," said she archly, "at least I suppose the world is something like Sutton Priors, when it is full of company, and—and—I do not like it."

The Dean laughed at this naïve admission, but the next moment he was serious.

"The time may come, Di, when it may, perhaps, be your duty to live in what is called the world."

"Yes, papa; but at present, I would rather stay quietly at home."

"Under existing circumstances—" began her father, but she interrupted him, blushing as she spoke.

"This is no sudden resolution; I have thought of and considered it again and again, and if you knew all that is in my mind, if I

could express what I feel, you would think I was right," said she rapidly.

"I think I can guess your motives, eh Di? and, in my opinion, you have judged wisely. As to your aunt's disappointment, you must excuse yourself as best you can."

"You will write to her, papa; my aunt will not dispute your judgment," said Di, with an entreating face.

"Well, well, perhaps it would be better; if I write now, there will be an end of the matter. Ah! Di, I am afraid you always manage your old father," said the Dean, as he closed his study door.

CHAPTER III.

Is it easy
So to break trust and faith? Are all the tales
Of constancy, that make the heart beat high,
Mere fables?

ANON.

ANOTHER year passed after the conversation recorded in our last chapter, and the time of probation was not *almost*, but quite over. It was Lionel Gresham's twenty-first birthday. For years past there had been "a talk" of the gand doings which were to celebrate that day, and true to his word, all Lord Stanford's tenants, great and small, from young Farmer Steer, who rented two thousand acres, to old Dame Meaks, who gloried in the little one-

roomed tenement on the border of the common, were dining in tents beneath the avenue.

But it was the steward, "not my lord, nor Mr. Gresham either," who sat at the head of the great table, and got up to return thanks when the heir's health had been proposed by the oldest tenant on the estate, the proud man who for sixty years had held the same farm. Perhaps that toast was the only one that was drank with great enthusiasm, and even these cheers died away abruptly, and were followed by an awkward pause, when men looked in each other's faces, and then at the closed windows of the Great House, and marvelled that none came forth to rejoice. Something was said about drinking "Miss Gresham's health, the bride that was to be;" but Mr. Higgins, the head gardener—a man of the world—to use his own words, "soon knocked that idea on the head," saying, with a lofty air—

"The family might not like it, it would be thought, perhaps, too great a liberty."

So the dinner went off but flatly, and the games in the park were not kept up with much spirit, and no young ladies came from the rectory to see the school children enjoy their tea and cake. "It was strange, passing strange."

"There was not," as Dame Meaks said, "one of the name to the fore—why, 'twas only yesterday that she see the family from the rectory drive by towards the station, children, servants and all; she wondered that any ways they had not stopped over to-day."

Wiser heads than Dame Meaks felt that something was wrong; for not long before Lord Stanford had been down, he had himself arranged the programme of the entertainment, which was to celebrate this memorable first of August, and had personally invited most of his tenants. At that time he seemed to think that he could not do enough to mark his satis-

faction at the two events, which were to occur simultaneously, his son's return and his coming of age. The housekeeper had received orders to have every available room in Sutton Priors ready for the guests who had been invited, and that staid and formal house had been turned upside down, for such hosts of company had not been heard of since the days when Lady Stanford was a gay young bride. Even she was going to break through the invalid habits, which had forced her to live in almost utter seclusion for years past.

The fatted calf—under which metaphor we would include sundry short-horns, and South-Downs—was actually killed, when a letter came from Lord Stanford, in which he apprised his steward "that circumstances had occurred which would prevent his being present on the first of August as he had intended." What these circumstances were, he did not vouchsafe to communicate, yet orders were

given that the festivities should take place as intended.

Lady Stanford also wrote so shortly and pithily to Mrs. Norton, to say, "That her preparations for guests might be laid aside, as she was not well enough to leave town at present," that it was shrewdly conjectured in the housekeeper's room, that Lord Stanford had dictated the missive.

"Neither my Lord or my Lady," Mrs. Norton said, "so much as mentioned Mr. Gresham."

Confident hopes were entertained, therefore, that Mr. Gresham himself would come, but the day arrived, sped, and was actually gone, and no Lionel had gladdened the eyes of an expectant people.

It was some weeks before the simple inhabitants of Sutton were enlightened as to the meaning of this strange mystery, but on that very evening, miles and miles away, the same subject was under discussion. Mrs. Gresham

and Miss Courtenay were, as the latter lady would have expressed it, "talking it over." Though somewhat discursive, their conversation may perchance serve to inform the reader, and throw some little light on this knotty point.

"There never was a positive engagement between Diana and Lionel," said Mrs. Gresham, in a most deprecating tone; "for, from the very first, Lord Stanford said that when his son came of age, it would be quite time enough to talk of their marriage."

"So much the worse," retorted Miss Courtenay, with asperity; "I must confess I do wonder at the Dean's ever having allowed Lord Stanford to dictate to him in a matter so nearly concerning Di's happiness. From the first, I foresaw what must be the result of his permitting so indefinite an understanding between the young people."

Though she was perfectly aware of the fact, Mrs. Gresham prudently abstained from re-

minding Miss Courtenay, that for the last two years, nobody had spoken so confidently of Diana's eventually marrying her cousin, as her aunt had done. It was in vain that the Dean had warned his sister-in-law, that the love of a mere boy rarely survived till manhood: Miss Courtenay had persisted in considering the affair as only postponed—had thought she was only doing her duty to her poor sister's child, in pursuing her own line of conduct. She had done her uttermost to enhance the remembrance of her youthful lover in her niece's mind; and what, perhaps, was at this moment annoying her more, she had whispered these expectations in confidence to every one of her own intimate friends, speaking of the engagement as a certainty, and accounting for the delay by saying that they were thought too young to marry at present.

Mrs. Gresham knew all this, but she very wisely held her peace. She was well aware that despite the outward show of cordiality

subsisting between herself and her hostess, Miss Courtenay had never either forgiven or forgotten what she considered her usurpation of her sister's place; though, for the sake of her step-children, she was very careful never to give just cause of offence to the rich maiden aunt, on whose caprice their future prospects depended.

"I saw Alicia this morning," resumed Mrs. Gresham, after a slight pause.

Miss Courtenay opened her eyes in amazement.

"Yes," continued the first speaker, "and you will believe me when I say I went to Grosvenor Square with the utmost unwillingness, but the Dean is so very anxious that this unpleasant affair should cause no division in the family, and Lady Stanford wrote in such miserable spirits, imploring me to come, that I could hardly do less than accede to her request."

"No one can have been on more friendly

terms with Lord and Lady Stanford than I have hitherto been," said Miss Courtenay, with dignity. "For my poor sister's sake I passed over all that two years ago might have been deemed offensive in their conduct towards her child and my niece; but from henceforth *I* shall hold no communication with them. This morning I erased their name from my visiting book."

Mrs. Gresham with difficulty repressed a smile, but the matter under discussion was far too great an annoyance to admit of more than a passing shade of amusement.

"I really think Lionel's parents regret the past quite as much as we can do," said she. "Indeed, Alicia told me, with tears in her eyes, that Stanford blames himself for having put his veto on an engagement between Diana and his son; but my husband says, and with truth, that if his brother had seen fit to give his consent to the cousins' marriage two years ago, he himself should have demurred on the

score of Lionel's youth; it would have been the height of folly to have permitted a boy of nineteen, and a girl only just out of the school-room, to rush headlong into matrimony. And for myself, I really do agree with Robert in believing that engagement, or no engagement, the result would have been the same; if Lionel's constancy could not endure this two years of suspense and doubt, his most solemn promises would probably have shared the fate of his repeated and reiterated professions of attachment."

Miss Courtenay shook her head, whether in denial of these sentiments, or merely in deprecation of the perfidy of men in general, the deponent saith not.

"What did Di say to your visit?" asked she, at length.

"I did not speak to her on the subject; I thought it would be needlessly harassing her; I simply said, at breakfast this morning, that I should be obliged to go out about

twelve, and that probably I should not be back till it was time to set out for Hampton Court. Milly wanted a new bonnet sadly, so the Dean proposed taking both the girls for a walk, before the hour Lord Stanford had promised the carriage should call for me. He thought anything was better than allowing Di to remain desolate and unemployed in the sitting-room of a London Hotel. Her own thoughts, poor child, would be but sorry company just now," added Mrs. Gresham, with a sigh.

"I hope they went to some good shop, and were not tempted to make purchases in Oxford Street," said Miss Courtenay, anxiously, who, like the generality of maiden ladies, attached a good deal of importance to the affairs of the toilet.

"I do not know; Milly seemed to think they had been very successful, and Di's taste is always good," said Mrs. Gresham, indifferently. "But here are the girls to answer for themselves."

Milly was the first to enter, far more tranquilly than was her wont; even her vivacious spirits were saddened and subdued by the quiet unexpressed sorrow she read in the faces of those around her. She was the eldest of Mrs. Gresham's own children, but just sixteen, and a very pretty miniature likeness of her still good-looking mother. For the first ten years of her life, Miss Courtenay had detested her as the rival of her darling niece, but that delusion Diana and Milly had contrived, between them, to live down, and though the spinster still, on all occasions, repudiated the idea of any relationship between herself and Mrs. Gresham's children, and carefully corrected any strangers who might inadvertently speak of Mildred as *her* niece, yet she had a secret liking for the sparkling little brunette. It had been a great stretch nevertheless to acquiesce in Milly's accompanying her sister on a long and indefinite visit; but the Dean had suggested it; he had spoken of her society as

being good for Di, and though Miss Courtenay railed at the Dean's opinions both behind his back and before his face, and always pronounced him "to be just like other men," yet she gave way to him implicitly in this instance, as in all others, for even in condemning, she generally followed his advice.

Fond as her aunt was of her, she was reluctantly obliged to allow that Diana was a thorough Gresham; she had nothing about her that savoured of the Courtenays, and the long pedigree on which the last representative of that branch of the family so valued herself, save and except the quaint appellation of Diana; a name which also appertained to Miss Courtenay. And that lady always felt it as a personal insult when the Dean revived his favorite joke of its having been unorthodox, and in direct violation of an early canon of the church, that his daughter had been named after a heathen goddess. He always assured his sister-in law she had led him astray, it was all her fault.

Whether the name were pretty or ugly, there was little chance of any one's doubting under which category to place its youngest proprietor. People, particularly ladies, might and did say they could not admire Diana Gresham's style of beauty, still they could not deny she was a beauty, and in a style which, moreover, is rarely, if ever seen, save in the higher ranks of life. The Courtenays, as any one must have been aware, who was acquainted with the spinster of that name, traced their lineage back to the days of the Conqueror, and though Miss Courtenay deemed the Greshams mere modern upstarts, and sighed over the present peer, being only fifth baron, yet she could not deny that it was from them that Di inherited her bright shining hair, alabaster skin, clear grey eyes, and well cut Saxon features. Miss Courtenay, in her youth, had been "*petite*," and was now nearly as broad as she was long, but her niece was tall and slight, and moved with that stately undulating grace, which no

money can buy, and which dancing lessons, calisthenic exercises and governesses are all inadequate to bestow.

Fortunately for Miss Courtenay, who ever since the arrival of her guests, at Hampton Court, late in the afternoon, had been dying for some private converse with Mrs. Gresham, the two girls had asked and obtained permission, after dinner, to go out and enjoy the brilliant summer evening in the gardens of the palace. Yes, "enjoy," had been the word used, though, at the moment it passed her lips, Di had felt as if she should never again know its meaning. And yet the feverish excitement of her whole frame oppressed her, and made stillness of mind and body an insupportable torment, inspiring her with a restless desire of escape from the dull, close room, and measured tones of those who, throughout dinner, had been speaking formally and drily on every subject but the one which occupied their minds, to get away, as it were, from herself, from her own agitated reflections,

if that were but possible. All that day she had been struggling to appear as though nothing had happened; but the dark circles round her eyes betrayed nights passed without sleep, and tears shed when none were by to mark their flow. There was a world of quiet sorrow lurking even in the compressed outline of the generally smiling mouth.

In their mutual anxiety regarding her, Mrs. Gresham had made her wrap her shawl more closely round her; and Miss Courtenay had suggested the expediency of a boa, though the evening was sultry, before Di, who had stood apparently listening with the utmost tranquillity to her more vivacious sister's description of their adventures in search of a bonnet, could force herself to speak.

"You will not have tea before nine, aunt?" said she, as she turned to leave the room, in the short, hard tone of one who is determined not to show any emotion.

"No, my dear; if you come in when the

clock in the courtyard strikes, you will be in plenty of time."

Miss Courtenay, though now her income numbered as many thousands as it had formerly done hundreds, still retained her apartments in Hampton Court Palace. She and her only sister had been born and brought up there. Those old walls had witnessed all the happiness her youth had ever known—it had been little enough—for it had been the lot of Mrs. Courtenay and her daughters to experience, in no slight degree, that hopeless and irremediable poverty, which is not the less acutely felt, because the sufferers are well-born, and have been gently nurtured; and the early part of Miss Courtenay's life had been one long struggle with the sordid cares and petty anxieties of every-day existence, from which a suffering and invalid mother had neither strength nor energy to shield her daughters.

Fanny, the youngest sister, after a long and apparently hopeless engagement of ten years duration, had married the Honorable and Reverend Robert Gresham. The living of Sutton was worth seven or eight hundred a year, which seemed boundless wealth to one whose previous life had been passed in learning a hard lesson of self-denial and privation, on the scanty resources which but too often are the allotted portion of the widows and unmarried daughters of men, the greater part of whose income has died with them.

Those days were past and gone now. Poor Fanny had died after some few happy years of marriage, leaving a boy, the Frank to whom we have before alluded, and little Diana, then an infant in arms; and her husband, finding his home very desolate, and his children sadly neglected, had, after a decent interval, married again. An act for which Miss Courtenay had never heartily forgiven him, not even now that it had proved a really happy event for the

nephew and nicce, whom she persisted in considering so deeply injured by this second alliance.

Some ten years later, on the sudden death of a distant relative, Miss Courtenay, who had never thought it possible that a man who disowned her when living should make her his heir when dead, woke one day to find herself mistress of a handsome house in town, and an income of three thousand a year. She actually did not believe the man of business, who came down to acquaint her with this unexpected accession of fortune. Her brief ejaculation, when finally convinced of the truth of this startling fact, was characteristic—

"It has come too late."

It was true enough. Had she not lived to see those she loved go down to the grave before her? and what is well-nigh as sad, she had been condemned to sit still, and see all the bright hopes and aspirations of her younger days die out, and leave her desolate and alone.

Rich and prosperous as she now was, there was something in Miss Courtenay's face, especially when speaking of the past, which revealed to the acute observer, that old maid as she had lived, and would probably die, she had not passed through life unloving or unloved.

Thoughts such as these were floating vaguely through Mrs. Gresham's mind, as, after the door had closed behind her daughters, she heard Miss Courtenay breathe a sigh.

"Di looks sadly worn and pale," said her aunt, at length.

"I am afraid she does," returned Mrs. Gresham; "while I hardly wonder at it; for I am sure she has felt her cousin's marriage more than she will acknowledge even to herself. It has alike wounded both her feelings and her self-respect, to find that Lionel, with whom, all her life long, she has been first, should, at the eleventh hour, prove false."

"Poor child!" said Miss Courtenay, who

was very soft-hearted towards those she loved, and who, prompted by curiosity and sympathy, was warming even towards the step-mother; "how did she first learn it? The Dean's letter, though pithy, and to the point, was most unsatisfactory as to particulars!"

"If Robert did not blame me for showing so faithless and doubting a spirit, I should be very much tempted to say that all the minor circumstances have worked together most unfortunately."

Miss Courtenay seemed by no means inclined to second her brother-in-law's practical divinity; and Mrs. Gresham proceeded—

"I think you heard of Stanford's being with us at Whitsuntide; he came down on business, and, as Alicia was not equal to leaving London, he preferred coming to the Rectory to the solitude of Sutton Priors."

"He knew nothing of it then, surely!" exclaimed her interested auditor.

"Nothing whatever; he had not even the

remotest suspicion of any change of purpose on his son's part," said Mrs. Gresham, eagerly. "On the contrary, though we did not hear it at the time, he spoke to poor Diana about her marriage with Lionel as a certainty. It seems he fancied she had been hurt by his opposition to their engagement, and fearful that it might influence her reception of her cousin, he alluded to it one day when she was riding with him, and assured her that nothing would afford Lady Stanford and himself greater happiness than to welcome one they knew and loved so well as their daughter. I really believe it; for having no girls of their own, Stanford and Alicia have always made a great pet of Diana."

"When did Di tell you this?"

"Di never said anything about it either to her father or myself. Milly repeated it to me. She had heard of it from her sister weeks before."

"For my part I cannot understand Lord Stanford's sanctioning his son's marriage. I

cannot think what he means by it," was Miss Courtenay's angry response.

"Sanction it!" returned Mrs. Gresham; "he never has, and I almost fear he never will. But this time he has had no choice. You know Lionel was expected last week; he was to be home by his birthday. Well, the very day fixed for his return, a letter arrived instead, simply announcing his engagement to this Miss Russell, and asking his father's consent. Naturally enough, Lord Stanford was most indignant. His first impulse was to write and forbid his son's taking any such step; but, on second thoughts, he decided on going himself to Paris, and doing what he could to break off the engagement. He knew something of Lady Vaughan—whom even Alicia pronounces to be a designing, artful woman—and he fancied that by refusing to make any settlement on her daughter, or to increase Lionel's present allowance, he might put a stop to the whole affair."

"And a very good thing too," said Miss Courtenay, relenting. "Let me see, did not that celebrated Lady Vaughan, whom I remember as being so much talked of as a beauty, and who made herself so notorious many years ago, end by running off with a Mr. Russell?" added she.

"The very same person," said Mrs. Gresham. "You may, therefore, imagine Stanford's dismay, when the next morning brought a letter from Lionel to his mother—he dared not own it to his father—confessing that he was actually married."

Miss Courtenay was horrified; her ejaculations and expressions of surprise and amazement occupied some minutes; at last she recovered herself sufficiently to say—

"And poor Diana, I suppose, never heard a word about it, till the marriage was found to be a fact?"

"Yes she did. Directly he was made acquainted with Lionel's change of purpose—not to say inconstancy—the Dean was positive that

whatever her uncle might think and hope, that it was only common justice to Di, to let her know the whole truth. The difficulty was how to break it to her—she was so totally unprepared."

"And you undertook that task, of course?"

"No, I really could not," said Mrs. Gresham, with much feeling. "For one moment the Dean did think I might speak to her on the subject, but we ultimately agreed that, all things considered, the better plan would be to give her Lord Stanford's letter at once."

This mode of proceeding evidently did not meet with Miss Courtenay's approbation; she would have preferred listening to the details of a scene of mingled tears and lamentations; and she said something about her thinking it would have been better to have prepared Di's mind—to have waited a day or two, in fact, until something more definite was known.

"More definite!" ejaculated Mrs. Gresham; who was one of those happy women who re-

joice in the belief that their husbands can do no wrong. "What could have been more definite than the fact that Lionel must have forgotten *her*, when he engaged himself to Miss Russell. No, no, when Di knew *that*, the worst was over—the bitterest pang past. Once divided from her by his own act and wish, and his marriage was nothing to her in comparison. Oh! I shall never forget that morning!" And Mrs. Gresham's long suppressed tears flowed at the recollection of the sorrow and dismay which had made that day memorable.

Miss Courtenay having first searched her pocket, then her work-basket, and at last having discovered her handkerchief hidden behind the sofa cushion, speedily followed this good and feminine example. She was thus moved by the recollection of what her own feelings had been when she received the Dean's letter. Mrs. Gresham proceeded through her tears.

"The Dean's first thought was that we

must go away, that we must leave home for a time. It never would have done to have remained at Sutton over to-day, it would have been taxing poor Di's fortitude and self-controul beyond all endurance. It was almost too much for her yesterday, when we drove under the triumphal arch of welcome, which had been erected at the entrance of the village, on our way to the Station. She was leaning back in the carriage, and I almost hoped she would not notice it, but little Georgie, who was in her lap, spied it out directly. I saw her turn pale when she drew her attention to it; she almost fainted, and then, poor child, said it was the heat that overpowered her."

Miss Courtenay could have listened to these details for ever, but tea came in, and the bald-headed functionary who brought it having vouchsafed the information that "the young ladies were just a-coming up stairs," which fact their footsteps in the outer room fully corroborating, she and Mrs. Gresham, after

a somewhat prevalent fashion began to talk quite eagerly and innocently about some crotchet which lay on the table; and it is to be presumed, thought they had quite disabused Di's mind of any idea she might previously have entertained, that they had spent the interval in talking of her or her concerns.

CHAPTER IV.

"To err is human: to forgive divine."
EURIPIDES.

MRS. GRESHAM remained over the following Sunday at Hampton Court Palace; to do Miss Courtenay justice, she pressed her most warmly to make a longer stay, but she had other claims upon her time and attention, for the Dean and her younger children were already established at C——, and anxious as she was about Di, she could no longer delay joining them. The cathedral town where the Dean's duties obliged him to reside some months every year, was brought by the railroad within a moderate distance of London; if anything was amiss, it would be easy enough to run up to Town for the day, visit Hampton Court Palace, and return at night to the Deanery,

and with this consolatory reflection, and after many private injunctions to Milly, to write directly, if Di should complain of indisposition, or if Di seemed to wish for change, Mrs. Gresham took her departure.

"All things considered," Dr. Gresham had said, "Di would be better at Hampton Court for the present than with them." To remain at Sutton was out of the question; even if his daughter had left home immediately, he could not have staid at the Rectory; he should not have liked to absent himself if he had been at home, and yet every feeling forbad his taking part in the birth-day festivities over which even Lord Stanford could not bring himself to preside.

Strange to say, Lord Stanford felt his son's marriage more acutely than any one would have supposed it possible that he should have done. It was not only that he disliked the connection Lionel had formed, and in this respect he had very just cause for complaint; the

very circumstances of concealment attending their union being, in themselves, sufficient to create a prejudice against the mother and daughter who could lend themselves to so unjustifiable a line of conduct. But he had become so accustomed to the idea of a marriage between the cousins, that even if Miss Russell had been as charming as she undeniably was fascinating, he would hardly have been satisfied with his son's choice. The very soul of honor himself, he was keenly conscious of Lionel's want of truth and constancy; he thought he had acted most dishonorably. Diana had been as he tersely expressed it, "ill used," that was a fact he could neither deny or conceal from himself, and she was his own and only brother's child.

Poor Lady Stanford did not know what to do or say; gentle and loving, softhearted and womanish to an extreme degree, like many another wife, she was possessed of unbounded influence over her severe and hard-

headed lord. It might be that she never opposed him, it might be that he never suspected that she ruled him, but, quiet as she was, nonentity as those who knew her not believed her to be, she certainly did give a coloring not only to his actions but even to his thoughts, at least to those in which she took an interest. Lionel, when he went abroad, had committed his cause to her. From the time when Di had been left a little motherless babe, Lady Stanford had loved her as her own child, and from the moment it was broached to her, the idea of their union had caused her unfeigned joy; since then it had become the first desire of her heart, the great object of her sad suffering life. And she had gradually talked Lord Stanford, first into permitting, then into desiring it, and finally into looking forward to the accomplishment of her wishes, almost, if not quite as much, as she did herself.

In the first burst of anger Lord Stanford had said that his son's wife should never

darken his doors. Lady Stanford would not have cared, had this sentence been applicable only to Lionel's wife, but her heart yearned towards her only child. She could not bear that Lord Stanford should harbour resentment against him. At the same time she was bitterly disappointed; Lionel had thwarted her fondest wishes, and she was as nearly angry with him, as it was possible for her gentle nature to be; she could not endure the idea of Miss Russell as his wife, and even went so far as to say that she never would receive her mother.

It was the Dean's task to soften his brother's asperity, and tone down his sister-in-law's acute feelings. Lady Stanford's excess of grief and nervousness had brought on a return of her old ailments which prevented their leaving London at their usual time, and the Dean went up to town for a day or two early in September on a mission of comfort.

"And how is Di, dear Di?" asked his

sister-in-law, as soon as Doctor Gresham was seated by her sofa, for he had diverged for a few hours on his route to see his daughters.

"Better than I expected, not in high spirits perhaps, but cheerful, yes I may certainly say cheerful." There was a little hesitation in the Dean's manner, which made Lord Stanford aware that he was not quite as easy about his daughter as he professed to be.

"And looking well I hope," added he, kindly.

"Yes, far better than I could have expected. And now tell me, have you heard from Lionel—is he coming home?" added he, anxious to change the subject.

Lord Stanford did not answer, he got up and walked towards the window, while lady Stanford replied hurriedly.

"Yes I had a letter from Lionel only yesterday. They have left Paris, and are travel-

ling in Switzerland, he is waiting and hoping to hear from us about returning."

Her Lord turned round sharply; he had not a good temper, but he never spoke angrily to her, so now addressed himself to his brother.

"I do not keep them out of England, they may come back and live just where they please; I make but two exceptions—this house and Sutton Priors—I do not mean to shelter them under my roof."

Lady Stanford looked piteously and helplessly towards the Dean; but his brother was still speaking.

"Lionel has his allowance as usual; many young people begin life on five hundred a-year; and they must rough it on that till I am dead and gone; he has done his best to bring my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave."

Lady Stanford's fortitude could endure no more; though she had heard this speech every day for the last month, it always moved her

unto tears, and as regularly her Lord so far relented as to say—

"You may see Lionel as often as you please, Alicia. I am sure I do not wish to separate you from your son, but I will not have him bringing his wife home and thrusting her upon me."

A pause followed, which the Dean took advantage of to state his sentiments with all due moderation.

"All things considered,' this was his favourite phrase, "it may be as well that Lionel and his wife should not reside with you at Sutton Priors, nor indeed in London; there I quite agree with you, still I do think, Stanford, that for Alicia's sake, if not for his own, you should make a point of receiving the young people. It is casting a slur upon your son not to take any notice of his bride."

Lord Stanford asked angrily what else the boy had a right to expect, marrying privately,

and without saying one word about it to his own parents.

"That is the worst part of the business, I acknowledge," replied his brother temperately. "It was a great mistake; but Lionel is so easily led, which—besides that, I believe from what I have seen of his letters, that he is truly penitent—is another reason for getting him away from his wife's family. Leave him to their influence, and his character may be ruined; but get him home, and you may, perhaps, make something of his wife; she is young, and may probably be moulded into what habits and modes of thinking you please."

"She is nine-and-twenty," said Lord Stanford drily; "she has been brought up on the Continent, and has lived all her life in such society as people of the calibre of Mr. Russell and Lady Vaughan pick up in moving from one dissipated place to another. What can one expect from the daughter of such a woman as

I remember Lady Vaughan to have been. It is next to impossible that the girl can have grown up good for much; you know what the English are at Brussels, Baden-Baden, Florence, &c., &c., and what species of foreigners associate with them. All *rouès* and sharpers," muttered he, in conclusion.

"I thought Mr. Russell was dead."

"So he is, he was shot in a duel caused by a quarrel over the gambling table," groaned Lord Stanford.

"Everything I hear tends to strengthen my opinion that the sooner Lionel is got out of the hands of these people the better. For God's sake! Stanford, beware how you delay; the mischief may be irremediable," said the Dean earnestly.

Lord Stanford walked moodily up and down the room, his brother's arguments were taking effect; at last, he said—

"No, it will not do—if I were to give way and say, 'come to Sutton Priors at once,' I

should be obliged to keep them there a few weeks before I could judge of the girl's disposition, and what is best for the future. Then you see Christmas would be at hand, when of course you would return to the rectory. No, Lionel may forget what is due to you and to your daughter, but I will never subject Di to the necessity of associating with his wife, it would be too cruel. She has borne enough already."

"Do not let that be a consideration," said the Dean mildly, "I have already decided on remaining at C—— till the spring."

"Why so? you have never been so long absent before."

"For many reasons, though to tell you the truth, it is principally on Di's account. It is needless to attempt to conceal from you, my dear Alicia," said he, turning to his sister-in-law, "that Di has felt this sudden blow to her very heart's core. She may say she is quite happy, and strive to appear in spirits; but you

cannot look in the poor girl's face and not perceive that she has suffered—" and the Dean's voice was husky with emotion; but he went on. "Still she has shown such a depth of firmness and so much strong and steady resolution in conquering her feelings, that I cannot but hope that time will do much for her, will restore her to what she was before this shock."

"If any one is to pay the penalty, if any one is to sacrifice their home, it must be the guilty one—it shall be my son—it shall be Lionel," said Lord Stanford, hurriedly, laying his hand on his brother's shoulder.

"But hear me," returned the Dean, "let me go on. To come home, to return to a place fraught with so many associations of earlier and happier days, would, to my thinking, be almost as prejudicial to Di as a meeting with her cousin and his wife. Let us give her time to get over it before we bring her back to Sutton. My idea was to allow her to remain quietly at Hampton Court for a couple of

months; just at this time, what with cricket and archery, there is a good deal going on at C——. She would not feel disposed to join in anything of the kind at present, I am very sure, and her remaining in seclusion might excite remark, which of all things is to be avoided."

"Very true," echoed both his attentive listeners.

"Frank has his leave in November or December; it is somewhat unfortunate he should be quartered in London just now; but he will come to C—— for his sister's sake, and get what little hunting he can there. What would be an effort otherwise—going into society I mean—she will do for the pleasure of being with her brother; and then, in the spring, I intend she should, as Diana Courtenay has always wished, go to London for the season. Di has had so much to sober her, that I shall not be afraid of a little dissipation."

"Di is such a dear, good girl, nothing could spoil her," said Lady Stanford, warmly; "and I cannot bear to think—" She could say no more—tears choked her utterance.

"We have never been a whole six months at Sutton Priors without you, Robert: I do not know how we shall get on by ourselves," said Lord Stanford.

"You will not be by yourselves, if you decide on asking Lionel and his wife."

"Well, well, I must think of it; I shall do nothing in a hurry," was Lord Stanford's salvo to his own conscience and dignity; but the next day, after dinner, he asked his brother what addition he thought he ought to make to Lionel's income, if, only *if*, he did forgive him and set him up in a home of his own; and then the Dean knew he had accomplished the object he had in view in coming to London. Before he went away, Lady Stanford was, comparatively speaking, happy.

"If ever there was a real Christian, it is

Robert," said she to her Lord, the evening of his departure. "Just think of his coming all the way from C—— to persuade us to pardon poor Lionel."

"He preaches forgiveness to his enemies, and he practises it, which is more difficult," said Lord Stanford; "for if anybody had a right to feel hurt and angry, it was the Dean. I told Lionel, in my letter of this morning, that he owed everything to his uncle's intercession."

"I always hoped Lionel and his wife would have lived with us; it has been my desire for years to have a daughter-in-law to supply my place, or rather, to undertake those duties, which I, perforce, have abandoned," said Lady Stanford, sadly. "But now these painful circumstances seem to have robbed me of my anticipated pleasure. I do not feel as if it would give me any happiness to instal a stranger as the mistress of Sutton Priors."

"Mistress of Sutton Priors—no!" answered

Lord Stanford; "that would never do. It is one thing to receive our son's wife—to countenance her for his sake in fact—but it does not follow that we are to lavish our confidence upon her, before we know what she may turn out. If I am not mistaken, Miss Russell will prove a very different person from Diana Gresham."

Lady Stanford sighed—

"I wish we had allowed them to marry two years ago."

She always said "we," and talked of "our" having done things, in which she, at all events, had no part.

"I wish I had never sent Lionel abroad," returned her Lord; "but, as Robert says, the evil is irremediable, and it only remains for us now to make the best of it;" and for once in his life, Lord Stanford echoed his wife's sigh.

CHAPTER V.

Learn by a mortal yearning to ascend
Towards a higher object. Love was given,
Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end;
For this the passion to excess was driven,
That self might be annulled.

WORDSWORTH.

The present was all sunshine,
A blessed summer day.

ANON.

DI was sitting by the window, book in hand, when Miss Courtenay came in prepared for walking. Her eyes were not bent on its pages however; she was gazing vacantly on the geraniums and heliotropes which ornamented the leads, on which the broad, old-fashioned sash opened; and if her gaze strayed beyond,

there was little save blank walls on the one side, and a very formal row of windows on the other, to attract her notice. The murmuring of the fountain in the court-yard below had lulled her faculties into quiescence, but it was no gay day-dream, no vision of a bright and shadowy future, which occupied the musing girl now; life—cold, bare, and dreary,—life as it really was, stripped of the illusions with which she once had decked its untried mazes, formed the subject of her contemplations.

Diana Gresham was no foolish love-sick girl; the past, the irrevocable past, had, it might be, set its seal upon her character, but none the less had she, by a desperate effort, cast out from her woman's heart the all-engrossing thoughts and feelings which had been, perhaps, too fondly cherished—too passionately nurtured. Still, changes such as these are not the work of an hour, or of a day. However earnestly resolved, many long weeks must pass, and weeks must grow into months, ere

the real, in very truth, takes the place of the ideal. The more imaginative, the more earnest the character, the deeper the well-springs of the heart, the longer it is before its troubled waters settle back to their wonted calm and equable flow—the greater the sensibility, the more exalted the nature—the harder the self-imposed task of watching the bright star of hope, which once made existence so radiant, fade out and set for ever.

Young as she was, our heroine had more character than many women of twice her age; and as all the great events of each mortal's life tend to the development and growth of the mental and moral qualities, bearing with them influences for good or ill, often but little suspected and seldom looked for; so under the stern discipline of heavy sorrow—of a sorrow deepened by the poignant agony of feeling—that she had been deceived by one in whom she had placed all the trust of love—Diana Gresham, in rising superior to all morbid feel-

ings of repining misery, was daily gaining both strength of purpose and stability of principle. The ardent, impulsive girl was fast merging into an earnest, thinking, feeling woman.

But Miss Courtenay is speaking in quick and impatient tones, and it behoves us to listen.

"Not ready, Di? You are coming out with us, I hope," added she, somewhat anxiously, and emphasising the personal pronoun.

Her niece acquiesced in the second proposition, but looked at the clock near her in self-justification as regarded the first.

"Neither Milly nor I shall be long putting our bonnets on, aunt; and it wants five and twenty minutes to four."

"Milly invariably keeps me waiting," answered Miss Courtenay, in a wailing tone; "either she has forgotten her parasol, or her handkerchief, or something that is quite indispensable to her appearance and comfort; only

the last time the band played in the gardens, she actually came out and walked about the whole time with two gloves for the left hand instead of a pair."

Di had become so accustomed to Miss Courtenay's perpetual catalogue of grievances, that what was an annoyance to Milly did not in the least ruffle the placidity of her temper. Knowing, however, that there would be no peace till they prepared for walking, she rose with the utmost alacrity, and was leaving the room, when Miss Courtenay called her back.

"I have been paying a visit to Mrs. Glenny —Lady Penshurst, who has lent her her apartments, asked me to do so;" this parenthesis was spoken apologetically, "she has a nephew in the regiment now quartered here, a Captain Glenny, who, she tells me, has made the acquaintance of my nieces."

"Captain Glenny! I never even heard his name before," said Di, in some surprise.

"Well," said Miss Courtenay, superciliously,

"he is good enough to say that he admires the young lady prodigiously."

The disdainful curl of Di's lip told how much value she set on such a compliment; but before she had time to speak again, she caught an imploring glance directed towards her by Milly, whose whole face was suffused with one vivid blush.

"Can it be the Leslies' friend, Milly?" said she, carelessly, as she turned towards her sister, who was bending over a heap of disarranged music.

"Yes, I believe so," was the somewhat confused answer.

"So it is you, Miss Mildred, who have scraped acquaintance with this dragoon," was Miss Courtenay's sarcastic comment. "Pray how was it brought about?"

"Captain Glenny is in the same regiment as Frederick Leslie," said Milly, in some trepidation.

"Oh! I remember now," said Di, who was

always on the watch to shield her sister from the rebukes which were but too often her portion; "did not you say, Milly, that he was of the party the day that the Leslies took you with them to see Windsor Castle? I had forgotten the name; but I suppose Captain Glenny was the individual."

"Have you ever seen him since, Mildred?" demanded Miss Courtenay.

Frank and open as the day, the culprit answered in the affirmative.

"Oh, yes, often, whenever I go out with Phyllis Leslie and her brother."

Miss Courtenay's face darkened.

"Do you know what his father is?"

No, Milly had never heard him say anything about his father.

"He is a Stockbroker," rejoined the maiden lady, as though, in those four words, she had expressed the very *acmè* of degradation.

Milly did not know the exact nature of a Stockbroker's occupation—it was something in

the city—but she was fully aware that business of any kind in that locality was enough to rouse Miss Courtenay's bitterest feelings of contempt. Her music was all laid smooth by this time, so she made her escape, with, it must be confessed, a head far more full of Captain Glenny's "prodigious admiration" of her little self, than of his father's mode of earning an honest livelihood.

"Diana," said Miss Courtenay, solemnly, having by a gesture detained her niece, and pausing till she heard the door of the ante-room close after her sister; "Diana, it is a very different thing allowing Milly to walk day after day with the Leslies, from exposing her to an intimacy with this Captain Glenny."

Di opened her eyes enquiringly.

"Yes it is, believe me," said her aunt. "Now, what I mean is, if such a thing were to happen as for Milly and Frederic Leslie to take a fancy to each other, there could not be a better connection; money and family on the

one side, family and beauty—for I must say Milly is growing up really pretty—on the other. But with Captain Glenny it would be very different."

Miss Courtenay saw the tell-tale colour fly to Di's face. She had very little perception of the finer chords of feeling in her niece's nature, against which her words were jarring.

"I do not think such an idea has ever crossed Milly's mind," answered Di with more than her usual outward show of calmness.

"Very likely not; but there is no saying what might happen."

"Is Miss Courtenay angry?" asked Milly, anxiously; who saw there was a shade on her sister's face, as she stood absently before the glass in their room, measuring and comparing the length of her bonnet strings, as though the fate of nations hung on their accuracy.

"No; why should you think so?" said Di, rousing herself and straightway tying her bonnet with unnecessary energy and haste.

"I don't know, I thought she did not seem quite pleased about Captain Glenny."

"Oh! you know it is only our aunt's way to interrogate people so closely," answered Di, carelessly; whose instinctive tact told her that to repeat Miss Courtenay's warnings might have the dreaded effect of giving them a stable foundation. "After all," thought she to herself, with a sigh, "what does it matter, so that Captain Glenny is honest and true, if his father is a stockbroker. Besides, it is ten chances to one if he has ever given Milly a thought; Frederick Leslie teases and treats her in just the same way he used when she was quite a little girl; and it is as likely as not that aunt's dreaded 'dragoon' thinks the same."

Having laid this flattering unction to her soul, Di was content. Whether at the end of the day, she felt equally secure of her sister's peace, remains to be seen.

Miss Courtenay's cross-examination had so far

delayed her nieces' toilettes, that the brass band of the —— Dragoons was clashing out polkas and waltzes beneath the shade of the lime trees, before they made their appearance in the gardens of the palace. That was one trial of the spinster lady's patience; and, for the next, some unknown and ill-dressed strangers had taken possession of the three garden chairs, which bore her name, and were her especial property.

"Now what are we to do, Di? I told you how it would be if you would not go up and put your bonnet on, when I desired you."

Her niece expressed a due portion of contrition.

"I cannot stand here, in this crowd, for two hours, Di; it is out of the question. I must go in, and yet I cannot leave you and Milly all alone. There are so many strangers about; Hampton Court is so different now from what it was in my young days."

Milly's countenance fell at the very mention of their returning to the Palace; but she was obliged to acquiesce; when Di professed their willingness to go in also, or to walk by themselves in some more retired part of the gardens.

This knotty point was still undecided, when Milly espied Miss Leslie and her brother coming towards them. Phyllis, her especial friend, was the youngest of four sisters, the eldest of whom was already married, the second engaged, and the third was, just at this juncture, away from home on a visit—that home being the Palace, where the sisters had, with their mother, come to reside on the death of their father, which was a somewhat recent event. Under the existing circumstances, of one sister being away, and the other entirely engrossed with her *futûr*, Miss Phyllis, who was of a most vivacious temperament, found herself greatly in want of a companion, and esteemed it an especial piece of good fortune,

when, to use her own words, "she found a kindred spirit" in Mildred Gresham.

How much they had in common—save their high spirits and joyous youth — is a very doubtful point; but Phyllis said they were made to be friends, and, in virtue of some little seniority in age, and of having been out a whole year, she quite took the lead, and queened it over Milly to her heart's content.

Diana was not sorry her sister had found a friend; for Milly's patience could not stand out against the tedium of sitting three mortal hours in each day, quiet, silent, and well dressed, with her back to the horses, in her aunt's barouche; happily for her, Miss Courtenay thought growing girls required a great deal of air and exercise, so she was excused from driving, and prior to the striking up of this friendship, which her aunt at first encouraged, Milly, for want of her sister, had been reduced to walk with a maid.

Miss Leslie and her brother were not alone,

the contemned Captain Glenny was in their company, and bustling up, Phyllis had introduced him to Miss Courtenay and Di, before the former could take any steps to ward off such a shock to her maidenly dignity. The matter of the chairs was brought forward instanter; Miss Courtenay detailed her grievances, and Captain Glenny's birth, or rather his want of it, was for the time forgotten in her sense of injury and insult.

He did more than sympathise; he actively espoused her cause, and walking up to the offenders, with a cool and somewhat impertinent air, begged leave to point out Miss Courtenay's name on the seats they occupied, convinced them of their error, and brought the chairs back, in triumph, to the spot where they stood.

Phyllis and Milly both laughed outright; Di was surprised at his coolness, which to her savoured of downright insolence; but

Miss Courtenay, generally so quick in detecting anything like a fault in manner, was in ecstasies of gratitude, and before five minutes had elapsed, the Stockbroker's son was informed, that she had a few friends to dinner on the morrow, and graciously invited to join the party. Captain Glenny had attained his object.

Phyllis Leslie was possessed with the most vagrant spirit, and no sooner were the whole party comfortably seated, than she was seized with a desire to walk up and down, by the water.

"It is so close here under the trees, Miss Gresham you will come? and I am sure Milly would like to move."

She carried her point; Miss Courtenay preferred sitting still, so she was left to guard her property.

And Di found herself, she hardly knew how, parading up and down between Miss Leslie

and her brother; Captain Glenny and her sister were so close behind, that at intervals she caught scraps of their conversation.

"I was so unfortunate as to miss you this morning," said he softly.

"I wished so much to come out," rejoined Milly innocently, "but Phyllis said she could not walk before twelve, and I had to be back in time for a drawing lesson before luncheon."

A few enquiries about her drawing, a comparison between the respective merits of figures and landscapes followed, and then Captain Glenny asked—

"Do you often take early morning walks?"

"Oh yes, I come out every day directly after breakfast."

"With your sister?" remarked Captain Glenny, interrogatively.

"No; Miss Courtenay likes Di to sit with her till luncheon time, and this is not like the country where one can wander about alone, so I am obliged to walk with old Harriet, when

she is not too cross to come; anything is better than sitting in-doors this lovely weather."

Captain Glenny acquiesced in this sentiment, though how often he took a country walk, or how much he would have enjoyed it if he had, was quite another question, and one which Milly never thought of mooting.

"Is any body ever cross to you?" continued he after the most approved fashion of military gallantry, "I should not have believed it possible."

Milly laughed, and her eyes involuntarily turned towards Miss Courtenay, whom they passed at this moment.

"So, so," was the dragoon's mental comment, "the maiden aunt draws the reins rather tight; I thought as much."

Captain Glenny was silently pondering in his own mind, whether it was worth his while to rise early, join in her walks, and lay regular siege to the heart of the "Pocket Venus," as he elegantly termed his little

companion. A moment's reflection brought him to the conclusion, that it would be "no go," for as he plainly saw, Milly had nothing of the flirt or coquette in her character. She was perfectly genuine, and as innocent as any child. So he proceeded aloud—

"I wish I had any chance of ever getting an early walk, but our Colonel has an unfortunate *penchant* for morning parades and inspections."

Milly had a faint idea that this wish to walk had reference to herself, but rejected it as an impossible vagary of her own brain, so simply said—

"I thought you never breakfasted till eleven?"

"Who told you so?"

"You did yourself," was the smiling answer.

"Did I? I had forgotten it; when did I give myself so bad a character?"

"Oh, a long time ago; the first time I

ever saw you, the day we went to see Windsor Castle."

What man could have resisted so artless a compliment, as the one paid him by Milly of remembering what he had said nearly a month before; Captain Glenny certainly was not insensible to it.

"Ah!" replied he softly, "I may forget what we spoke of, but I shall ever remember that day."

"The park was so beautiful," remarked Milly, rather shyly.

"I was not thinking of the park, but of something—of some one rather, who made far more impression on me," said he.

Captain Glenny's mental endowments were not of the highest order, but he could assume, when he chose, an intense manner, which gave to the mere commonplace nothings, he uttered, a very tender meaning. Milly was hardly likely to detect the difference between the counterfeit and the true metal, but her sister perceived

something of it, and as they turned at the end of the walk read his meaning in the pleased and self-satisfied expression Captain Glenny's face wore as he bent still lower towards her sister. She did not know that this was not the first, no, nor the twentieth proof Mildred had innocently accorded of the power of his fascinations, and not the first, no nor the twentieth time, that Captain Glenny had responded in the same strain.

But Phyllis Leslie made such unceasing demands upon her attention that she could hear no more of a conversation which at every turn of the walk, Milly's blushing, tell-tale countenance told her was fast verging towards the sentimental.

Diana Gresham had but little experience in the ways of this wicked world; it was not likely she should have gained it in the quiet seclusion of a country rectory; and during her father's yearly residence, she had been care-

fully kept out of the *quasi* gaiety which the presence of one or two regiments occasioned in the cathedral town of C——, but her intuitive sense of refinement prompted the feeling that it was not altogether right for Captain Glenny to pay her sister this sort of attention. She went in doors with rather a heavy heart, for she did not quite know what to do. Tell her aunt that her surmises touching Captain Glenny were in some sort correct, she could not, and would not. Miss Courtenay was quite severe enough with Milly as it was; give her the least hint of a flirtation, and she would lecture her sister morning, noon, and night; and fond as she really was of her aunt, Di, in all her communings with herself, could not deny that she was most injudicious. To write to her mother, she thought would be making that of importance, which, after all, might but be the amusement of the passing hour, and she was equally afraid of speaking to Milly on the subject

herself, lest she might call into existence thoughts, and awaken feelings, which she hoped had not as yet taken a tangible form.

The more she tried to reason with her anxiety, and to assure herself that it was groundless, the more clamorous did her fears become. Nor could she altogether acquit herself of blame. She felt that it was her own fault that she had not sooner known what a mere chance had now revealed to her. Anything like concealment was most foreign to her sister's nature. Often and often had Milly come in from an expedition with the Leslies radiant with happiness, full of their adventures, and eager to tell of all that had passed.

Di's heart smote her when she remembered with what a scanty measure of attention she had met her sister's confidences. She had often been too full of herself to listen with interest; self-engrossed, she had given disjointed, absent answers, or, what was worse, had pleaded a head-ache as an excuse for en-

tire silence. And Di bowed her head in self-accusing sorrow, for conscience told her, that occupied by her own thoughts, dwelling selfishly on her own griefs, she had shown but little consideration and sympathy for the sister she professed to love so well.

The next morning came, and, at any rate, the elder of the sisters was not sorry to hear the rain pattering against the old casement windows, and to see the sky overcast with thick masses of clouds, which seemed to promise a continuance of bad weather, for that day, at least. There would be no walking this morning; the morrow might bring with it better, wiser thoughts. That this imprisonment was anything but pleasing to her sister, she gathered from the fact of Milly's being unable to settle quietly down to either her music or her drawing; indeed, she wandered about so restlessly from window to window, upon the pretext of inspecting the state of the clouds, as to draw down sundry reproofs from

Miss Courtenay, which, however well-intentioned, were not much calculated to raise the spirits of her against whom they were directed.

One comfort Milly had on that dull, gloomy day, and but one; she should see Phyllis at dinner time, for by a not very unnatural concatenation of ideas, Phyllis Leslie, her brother, and her brother's friend, all conjointly occupied a place in her young mind and imagination, whose respective merits she had not, as yet, clearly learnt to distinguish. That knowledge was to come.

The dinner party of the evening was attended with far different results than those anticipated by Di. She had imagined that after all the tender speeches of the previous day, Captain Glenny, would be devoted to her sister. She was not sufficiently well versed in the arts of flirtation to understand the meaning of the unremitting attention he paid, on the contrary, to Phyllis Leslie. If Miss

Courtenay was quite deceived, as was in truth intended, it is not surprising that a young lady, yet in her teens, should have been somewhat perplexed.

Captain Glenny knew quite well what he was about. He had made up his mind in the five minutes preceding the announcement of dinner—"that it was better to sacrifice one evening than to have a stop put to the excitement of daily meetings with such a nice, pretty little girl as Mildred Gresham."

Chance seated him at the dinner-table beside Miss Leslie, of which vicinity he availed himself to put a few adroit questions about their hostess. Phyllis never governed her tongue, so Miss Courtenay's foibles, scruples, and particularities were painted in the most glowing colors, and embellished with sundry additions and exaggerations.

"I often wonder," said she, "by what good luck it happens that Miss Courtenay allows Milly to associate so much with us;

it would be just like her, to shut her up, particularly as she has a horror of officers, and thinks them all gay deceivers."

"You don't say so."

"Yes, indeed; but then," added Phyllis, maliciously, and with a sly glance towards her brother and Milly, who were talking, as Captain Glenny thought, rather more earnestly than was necessary, "Fred is such an excellent match, that it is very good policy on Miss Courtenay's part to throw them together."

Like a good many other young ladies, Phyllis, without the smallest reserve or reticence, generally turned the conversation upon the rather dangerous topics of love and matrimony. She had never felt the first, and she was in no haste to undertake the solemnities of the last named state, and, meanwhile, she talked about them so freely as generally to secure an attentive listener. Above all things, she liked a flirtation herself, and next to that was the delight of cooking up a love affair be-

tween other people. Milly was an excellent subject for her machinations. Captain Glenny was by no means backward, but at any rate it would do no harm to make him a little jealous, and before dinner was over, though he had worldly wisdom enough to conceal the impression made by her words, he was as much impregnate with this amiable feeling as even Phyllis herself could have desired.

After dinner that young lady, who made, it must be confessed, very shrewd guesses at the truth, told her friend, "that Captain Glenny stood greatly in awe of Miss Courtenay," and that she had told him that that lady really was "dreadfully particular," and though Milly said—

"Oh, Phyllis, how could you say so?" it must be confessed that she was much comforted and relieved at having his temporary desertion of herself, satisfactorily accounted for.

Captain Glenny kept aloof all the evening, and had the satisfaction of discovering that this

new line of conduct, left his lady love very disconsolate, caused her to stumble sadly in a duet she played with Di, simply because she was watching her friend instead of looking at her book, and made her accord but a very scanty meed of attention to Frederick Leslie, so occupied was she in trying to overhear what his sister was saying to the gay dragoon, who, however, seemed not to have so much as a glance to bestow upon herself.

Miss Courtenay went to bed satisfied, Di re-assured, Milly wretched, and Phyllis, as she laid her head on her pillow, thought, with delight, that she had stirred up Captain Glenny to be jealous of her brother, and put him on his guard against that old dragon, Miss Courtenay.

CHAPTER VI.

This just decree alone I know,
Man must be disciplined by woe.
To me, whate'er of good or ill
The future brings, since come it will,
I'll bow my spirit and be still.

ANSTICE'S TRANSLATION OF ÆSCHYLUS.

For my young troth was plighted,
To a warrior true;
And my maiden heart in its inmost part
Him as its own lord knew.

ANNABEL C.

TIME sped on its onward course; bright and sunny August, the short but brilliant days of September had alike come and gone, and October was fast following in their train, heralding in, as it is often wont to do, all the cold and chill of premature winter. In point

of fact, hardly three months had elapsed since they had left Sutton Rectory, and yet to Diana Gresham, and scarcely less so to her sister, days and weeks that in action had seemed to glide so swiftly by, now, in the retrospect, appeared to comprise a lengthened span of time. True life lies in the heart, not as some vainly fancy, in the external world around us, and yet, with the same result, how widely different had been the ebb and flow of feeling which, with thee sisters, cast such alternating shades of gloom and sunshine on the daily round of their existence.

Yes, for despite all that had gone before, there was sunshine even in the life of the elder sister, the mist, that, for a time, had hung so heavily on her path, had gradually cleared away; constant struggles with her weaker self, incessant warfare with her own thoughts and feelings, had brought their inevitable result, the victory had been hardly won, but it was won at last, and the dream of earthly happiness,

which had so long engrossed her being, was, in the end, resigned. Before she was twenty, Diana Gresham had learnt this hard lesson, a lesson which most of us are so reluctant to acquire, that it often takes years and years of the world's bitter schooling and harsh tuition to convince us of the fallacy of our early dreams.

Our heroine had within her that, which in some ages of the world, has constituted even weak, fragile, and beautiful women martyrs; else she had not set herself, as she did, steadfastly to realize that her destiny in life was fixed, and excluding the past, which now for her was a thing of sin, to feel an actual peace in the belief that she had no other outward change to which to look forwards, and that for her the work of life, the object of all self-discipline, was to be content, henceforth to live, not for herself, but for others. And this is really what it is so hard to do—it is, comparatively speaking, easy to perform great acts of heroism, to make

great sacrifices, far more easy than to bend the will patiently to endure all the crosses, penalties, and vexations of every day existence.

For weeks past Milly's life had been one of cloudless sunshine; Miss Courtenay's rebukes, Phyllis's vagaries were alike powerless to wound or discompose her: and what was more, she seemed so proof against all the fears, the doubts, the cares, that mar even in enhancing human love, that Di was sometimes almost tempted to doubt whether it were indeed *love*, which was so strongly influencing her.

A day came when all these surmises were set at rest. Di had, as usual, been driving all the afternoon with Miss Courtenay, and when she did come in it was so dark, late, and cold, that she did not much wonder at finding Milly crouched down by the fire in the sanctuary of their joint room, although contrary to her usual custom, she was sitting with her hands before her doing nothing.

"What! all in the dark?" said Di, in some surprise; but she got no answer. It was not till she had thrown aside her wraps, taken off her bonnet, and drew near to light the candles on the mantelpiece, that Milly seemed to notice her, or spoke at all.

"Di!"

"Well, what is the matter?" asked Di, caressingly; and, struck by something in the tone in which her name was uttered, she drew her chair in beside the low stool on which her sister sat.

"Why, Milly, what makes you so silent? You almost frighten me; come, look at me."

Thus adjured, Milly turned round, and then the pale face and unnaturally bright eyes, which this action displayed to view, did startle her sister.

"Di, I am going to be married," said she, with an effort.

"Is that all?" returned Di, who felt

strangely moved by the intelligence; but she was resolved to speak cheerfully and happily. "I am hardly surprised, but I am very glad," and she bent to kiss the face that was so anxiously scanning her own.

"Dear Di," said Milly, who always fond of her sister, was at this moment disposed to be particularly affectionate. After a little pause she spoke again; "I thought you would be astonished."

Di shook her head.

Milly was accustomed to her sister's manner, and knew that her silence betokened no lack of interest.

"You never spoke to me about it; you never even seemed to notice the hundred and one teazing speeches Phyllis was perpetually making."

"I did not like Phyllis's way of treating a subject, which, to tell the truth, I think too serious a matter for jest."

Milly's face spoke the entire assent she seemed hardly capable of putting into words.

"Besides," added Di, "though I often longed to speak, I was silent, because I really did not know what your feelings might be."

"Oh! Di."

"I think I understand them now," said her sister, and the smile, which was the great charm of her face, the greater in that it ever was the token of softened feelings, not of idle mirth, played for an instant round her mouth. It soon vanished, for Milly was so unusually crave, silent, and pale, that Di was involuntarily saddened.

Old Chaucer's enquiry—

> "What joy hast thou in thy loving?
> Is it a sweet or bitter thing?"

crossed her mind even before Milly spoke.

"What will mamma say?"

"Nothing to make you unhappy," returned

Di; who could not bear to see the usually blithe and smiling face wear so anxious an expression.

"And papa? Captain Glenny is not rich now, though he will be well off some day; he told me so himself."

The mention of her lover's name brought with it a crimson flush.

"My father knows better than most people that money is not necessary to happiness."

Still there was something weighing on the spirit that was wont to be so light and happy. Di perceived it, and said, softly—

"What is it, Milly?"

For a moment she did not answer; but the next she spoke with a vehemence which was most unlike her usual gentle manner.

"Papa will say, and mamma will think with him, that I am too young to marry; they are sure to answer that I am a mere child—that they cannot hear of it. But I am *not* a child Di; I can feel—they do not know how much—"

She had not finished speaking, but she literally had not breath to go on.

Di mastered the old rebellious thoughts, which, at these words, seemed to rise again; she beat them resolutely down—she heeded not the sharp pain at her own heart, as she gazed on the features whose strong emotions seemed so unnatural, on that young and innocent face.

"There is no need to anticipate evils; wait till they really come. Besides, if you are young, Captain Glenny has attained an age when he is likely to know his own mind."

The quick, half-drawn sigh which followed, belied the abrupt, short manner in which the words were enunciated.

But still Milly sat with her chin resting on her crossed hands; which, again, were clasped on Di's knee, with a force which was almost painful.

"And, what is more, if my father does

hesitate," continued Di, "it will only be to see if you are in earnest, till he can judge what is best for your happiness. He will not say 'no' at once, and for ever. You never knew him harsh or unreasonable to any one of us."

"No," was the answer; which came but slowly and sorrowfully. "No," repeated Milly, hesitating; "but he may not think it is for my happiness to marry. I have often heard him say he does not think marriage is essential to a woman's well-being, but I think, I feel—I—I—"

Di looked at the little being, who spoke with such choking, passionate emphasis, with unfeigned amazement. Was this the little sister she thought so young and childish? Was this the little Milly, whom their few years of seniority seemed to have justly entitled both Frank and herself to look on as a plaything and a pet. Yes, though the change

seemed marvellous and sudden, she comprehended it at a glance. The love that spoke so loud in the awakened girlish heart, had grown up quietly, silently, and all unwittingly, even to her who cherished it; the vague and floating tendencies, which haunt each human soul, had taken a tangible shape and form now; the sunshine was gone, and it was left for Di to sigh over the cloud that had so suddenly replaced it.

"Have faith, Milly," resumed she; "my father has only to see you, to know how much you are in earnest;" for to Di, the absence of all tears, especially in one from whose eyes they were wont to flow freely enough, spoke more forcibly than words.

Pale she was, and the muscles about the mouth twitched nervously, but the very strength of her feelings kept back her tears, overpowered her tremulous agitation, and made Milly, whom usually the veriest trifle excited

and upset, speak in a subdued voice, and in tones thrilling with low and passionate fervour.

"I have no faith, I cannot reason about it—but I *feel*—yes I *feel* what the verdict will be—'Wait, wait.' I know that it will be so. When I was with him I did not heed it. I had no fears; they waited to come till he had left me. But the moment I passed through the old archway—the moment I came under the shadow of the old Palace, I knew what fate had in store for me. Queens and princesses have had their hearts torn and wounded here, under this very roof—so shall I. Every step of those long, long stairs seemed to make it more certain — every moment that passed before you came in, assured me that my presentiments were but too true. I like to hear you speak, but you cannot talk them away, Di."

Di had ceased to wonder at what she heard. Even the lurid light of the eyes, which were

rivetted on her own, did not surprise her, but she sympathised more than ever. She understood but too well those wild imaginings, those excited fancies, which she, for her part, had stifled and trampled under foot; had she only divorced them from her own nature to see them revived in her sister; or did they come to all? Were they, in truth, erring, sinning Eve's legacy to all her daughters? No—myriads of soft, sweet-mannered, tranquil, conventional women sprang up before her mind's eye, and answered her self-communings in the negative. They had no share in these wild, passionate emotions; their smooth, smiling features faithfully reflected their worse than icy hearts, for beneath a frozen surface there is ever found deep, still, fathomless waters, while gelid frost touches not the shallow, rippling stream, which babbles on, unmoved alike by the hot breath of summer's fervid days, or by winter's stern grasp, till that too, lukewarm as it is, merges in the eternal sea. Calm

vicissitudes, shadowless modifications of thought and feeling, are the lot of nine women out of ten, perhaps of nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand. Their griefs are few, transient, and puerile; unimpressionable themselves, their very joys are scarce more deeply felt.

But putting aside these thoughts, Di descended once more to the practical.

"Let us suppose, Milly, only *suppose* the very worst that you fear should come to pass, and that my father does enjoin some delay."

"I could not bear the suspense—it would be worse than despair," was the desponding reply.

"You know not what utter, hopeless despair is," burst passionately from Di's lips, "or you would not speak thus; if to you suspense is so bitter, what taste do you suppose the full cup of disappointment leaves behind?"

Milly did not speak, but she unclasped her fingers, and took one of Di's hands between both her own. The mute caress encouraged her sister to proceed.

"Captain Glenny loves you; is not that enough for the present? That suspense at least is over," persisted Di.

"I never felt any suspense," said Milly, simply; "I never believed he could really care for me; Phyllis used to say so, but I did not think it possible."

"And yet you loved him!" said Di, in some amaze.

"I hardly knew whether it was the love Phyllis was always reading to me about in novels; I often wondered, but I did care to see him, to hear him speak, even when he did not address me. One day when he told Frederick Leslie that he should be entitled to, and perhaps take his long leave in November or December, I was, for a moment, miserable,

I thought I never could stay here if he were gone. The days when I have not seen him have always seemed so dull and tedious."

Her eyes softened, the colour came back into her face, and she who a few minutes back had been speaking with almost the impassioned fervour of a tragic actress, was relapsing into the fond, soft, loving, girlish being nature had made her.

"And so at last doubt grew into certainty?" remarked Di.

"I was certain of myself, even when I doubted him—but it was not doubt, I only thought I was neither wise enough, or good enough, or beautiful enough for him to think of."

That humble confession stamped the long-doubted love as genuine in Di's mind.

"*He*, as you call Captain Glenny, does not think so, I imagine."

A blush and smile were quite answer enough.

Di had well nigh fallen into another reverie,

when the striking of the clock in the court-yard, into which their windows looked, aroused her.

"Oh! Milly, we are late, you will never be dressed in one of Marie's, *petit quart d'heures;* had you not better ring at once?"

Milly rose but slowly.

"Di," she said, "I was to consult you as to whether it would be better for him to go to C——, and speak to papa, or write."

"And how are we to acquaint *him* with the result of our combined wisdom?"

"Captain Glenny," retorted Milly, again comforted by Di's voice and manner, "said he would call to-morrow morning in good time, and take his chance of finding Miss Courtenay off guard."

"Captain Glenny's own words, I doubt not," soliloquised Di, who could no longer speak aloud, for Marie had made her appearance. "However, if Milly does not dislike his mode of speech why should I? He must have some good about him to have excited such love in

her heart, and, besides, is it not a proof of innate power of appreciation that he should have preferred her to Phyllis. Most men would have been attracted by her lively prattle, for, beside her, Milly's vivacity is quite thrown into the shade."

On the whole, Di went down to dinner relieved and happy. She had been beset by the fear that Captain Glenny had not been in earnest. Wherever a regiment is quartered, there is no lack of gossip, and the poverty-stricken sprigs of nobility, and impoverished dowagers of quality, inhabiting the Palace, were glad enough of something to talk about. Di, who was condemned to accompany Miss Courtenay on occasion of sundry tea drinkings, from which Milly, from not being introduced, was happily exempt, heard a good deal about the flirtations and attentions of this and that "Captain, Cornet, Lieutenant." She did not give much heed to these surmises in general, save and except when, as was constantly the

case, she heard Captain Glenny's name. As it happened it was always coupled with that of Miss Leslie, and then her interest was awakened. Little wonder was it, if sometimes her faith in him was almost shaken. She knew he was paying Milly a great deal of attention, but suppose that these people were right, and that at other times he was equally devoted to Phyllis. The strange thing to her was, that no one seemed to think marriage the inevitable result of what they called "flirtation."

Earnest and sincere by nature, straightforward and honest by education, Di could not, at first believe that men, and, for that matter, women too, really take a pleasure in trifling with the feelings and affections of others. That any one could stoop to find in this sort of pursuit, food for vanity, an interest or an excitement, was, to her, incomprehensible, but she saw enough to convince her that it was so. In truth she was rapidly acquiring knowledge of the world, such knowledge, at least, as this

minute section of society afforded, and the more insight she obtained into the manners and customs of the nineteenth century, the more she had trembled for Milly, whose youth, whose diminutive stature, and almost childish manners, did not, it seemed, shield her, though it blinded the vigilant eyes around her, and induced the belief that all the walks, talks, and excursions, of which Phyllis was the instigator, had been undertaken by Miss Leslie on her own account.

Captain Glenny had proved himself superior to all the detracting voices which had pronounced him "a flirt and lady killer," and Di was content to believe that he had other and better qualities than those assigned to him, which she did not know him well enough to fathom.

By tacit consent, not a word was said that evening to Miss Courtenay of what had happened. Di supported the burden of the conversation. Milly sat quiet, silent, and subdued, which

silence however only endured so long as they were in presence of their aunt. Alone, and through half the night, Di must listen, sympathise, comfort, and advise.

CHAPTER VII.

Thy heart has learned a quicker pulse,
A deeper joy or pain ;
It will not—cannot now be still'd
To childhood's beat again.

THE next morning, Di purposely kept out of the way, for if she were not present to talk with, Miss Courtenay would often go and sit with an intimate friend on the other side of the palace.

On this particular occasion, however, she seemed to have made up her mind to stay at home, expressly, it would appear, to be fidgetted by Milly, who, restless and ill at ease, made up her mind not to leave the drawing-room, where she vainly tried a thousand different idle ways to kill the time and conceal her

own nervousness, which increased to an agonising degree every time she heard the servants move in the passage, or come through the outer door.

She was not kept very long in suspense, as early as a morning visitor was admissible, Captain Glenny made his appearance. Miss Courtenay, who had, by degrees, entirely embraced the prevailing delusion that he was on the high road to matrimony with Phyllis Leslie was very gracious.

That very morning she had said to Di—

"Well, my dear, I suppose it will be a match between Phyllis and her brother's friend. I thought when I heard of the young people's being so much together that something would come of it. Captain Glenny's connections are not very good, but, with her small income, I dare say Mrs. Leslie will not object to seeing another of her daughters settled."

Di, who was not so blind, could only say she did not think Phyllis and Captain Glenny

had ever thought of marrying, they were very good friends and that was all.

"Well, we shall see."

Accordingly, when Miss Courtenay, after having exhausted other topics, was crying up the Leslies, thinking thereby she was choosing the subject most agreeable to Captain Glenny, Milly flew out of the room.

"Di, dear Di," exclaimed she, as she burst in upon her sister, "do come into the drawing-room, Miss Courtenay is there, and I do not know what to do or say."

Di did not think she could be of much use, but to satisfy her sister she went.

As she expected, Miss Courtenay had got the conversation into her own hands; it was in vain that Captain Glenny kept appealing to Milly about her friend; blushes and monosyllabic answers were all he succeeded in extorting from her.

At last, in despair, he turned to Miss Gresham.

"Did your sister mention that I was thinking of going to C——, to-day? I charged her to ask whether I could be the bearer of any note or message to the Dean and Mrs. Gresham."

Before Di could reply, Miss Courtenay took upon herself to say—

"My nieces pretend they do not like C——, so well as their country home, but I think it is a charming place. Have you any friends living there?"

For once in his life, Captain Glenny, to use a vulgar expression, was taken a little aback by this direct question, or it might be that Milly's very conscious air was contagious; he speedily recollected himself, however, and answered—

"No, I have never been there before; I am, in fact, going down upon business." And the next moment, with a glance towards the corner where the Miss Greshams were seated, he

added, "I rather hope to find some friends—I am not certain, but I think it is just possible that I may be so fortunate."

Di was rather taken by the tone in which he spoke, she saw the appealing looks he directed towards Milly, who, whatever she might have done or said yesterday, seemed, to-day, quite incapable of even an encouraging smile.

When Miss Courtenay had finished all she had to say about C——, Captain Glenny rose; his formal adieux to her over, he came close up to Milly.

"Have you no note, no message—not one kind word?" said he, with soft emphasis, and dropping his voice as he came to the last query.

"Yes, no, yes," faltered Milly. "I cannot write, but go," added she, in desperation, lest Miss Courtenay should be listening.

Happily that lady was not very quick in hearing or seeing, and Captain Glenny had placed himself so as effectually to serve as a

screen. Di's presence of mind too, stood the lovers in good stead.

"We have neither of us had time to write," said she; "but, perhaps, you will tell mamma that we are very anxious to hear from home; so anxious, that I hardly think we shall either of us write till we get a letter."

Miss Courtenay finished up by the question Milly had all the inclination to ask, though she lacked the courage to speak.

"Do you make any stay at C—— ?"

"One day, perhaps. I shall be off within an hour; for I wish, if possible, to be back by to-morrow night."

"Oh!" said Miss Courtenay, as the door closed behind her visitor, "of course he will return for Mrs. Leslie's little party to-morrow evening. Miss Phyllis would not like to be without her admirer. By the way, that reminds me that Mrs. Leslie pressed me a good deal about bringing you, Milly: I hardly know what to do; when I was a girl, young ladies

of sixteen were never heard of, still less seen."

Milly had not cared much about it before; but her aunt's suggestion respecting Captain Glenny's presence made her particularly anxious to go.

"I should like it so much; there is to be dancing," said she eagerly.

"And I suppose you will be wanting to jig about in that horrid polka all night long, to say nothing of the *deux temps*, which is not much better. What would your father say to that I wonder."

Di thought it was high time to interfere, before her aunt had convinced herself it was her bounden duty to keep Milly at home.

"The Leslies have been so kind to Milly, Aunt, that I think no one can be offended at your making an exception in their favour, particularly as she and Phyllis are such great allies."

"Yes, yes, I should not mind it if it were not for the Dean."

"I do not think papa will mind Milly's going, mamma is much more likely to object."

As Di was well aware, she might have talked herself hoarse, before she could have suggested a reason, which would more surely have decided Miss Courtenay upon allowing Milly to go, and she forthwith pronounced—

"There can be no great harm in her going to one little dance; Milly looks so young and childish that everybody will know she is not out. I will bear the blame with Mrs. Gresham."

Milly was far too much delighted with this concession to grumble at the terms in which it was granted, particularly as she solaced her dignity with the reflection, that Captain Glenny, at any rate did not think her either young or childish.

All that day she lived upon the remembrance of her lover's looks and words. But, nevertheless, the next was one of wearing anxiety. She had made up her mind that Captain Glenny would call on her father in the morning, and

harassed herself with all, and more than all, the fears of his rejection which she had at first entertained, and which Di, during the last four-and-twenty hours, had vainly flattered herself she had reasoned away.

By noon her nervousness made the bad headache, under plea of which she excused her pale face and heavy eyes, no feigned pretext, and Di was thankful enough when Miss Courtenay—who was now as anxious to take Milly to the Leslies', as she had before been opposed to her going—ordered her off to quiet, silence and repose in her own room, and enjoined salvolatile and soporifics, instead of society.

Miss Courtenay, who was a great dabbler in the science of medicine, took great credit to herself, and dwelt strongly on the efficacy of her prescription, when at nine o'clock the invalid made her re-appearance in the drawing-room, looking as fresh and bright as if she had never felt a fear, or experienced an anxiety in her life. In very truth, this was Milly's first

care, and whether real or imaginary, had been strongly felt, but at the present moment, hope —the richest boon, the fairy gift of youth, the true secret of its exquisite happiness—predominated over and silenced all other feelings. These bright anticipations did not wane till she found herself where she so much wished to be, in Mrs. Leslie's apartments.

They were early, and the guests still assembling, but as Milly informed her sister in a whisper, the officers who took the trouble to go into society—or, as might more truly have been said, all whose pursuits and tastes did not keep them *out* of society—were come, "excepting Captain Glenny," concluded she in a dolorous tone.

"Do not despair yet, it is not quite ten; that is late to us country bumpkins, but not to other people; you need not give him up just yet."

The idea of being a country bumpkin was not at all palatable to Milly, and she proceeded

to reason with Di on the subject, which in some measure diverted her thoughts.

Frederick Leslie came up and carried off Miss Gresham for a quadrille. Having no one she could talk to on the one engrossing topic, and Phyllis scouting the idea of her preferring to sit still; Milly, too, was obliged to stand up.

Di, to whom dancing and small talk were now alike a pain and grief, had established herself in a quiet nook before her sister returned. How long in a party like this—where every one could see and be seen, she with her tranquil features, dazzlingly fair complexion, and rich sunny hair, to say nothing of a figure, which, though tall and stately, was full of undulating grace—she could hope to escape notice, was another thing. As she never troubled herself about what other people thought of her, she was quite ready to give her whole and undivided attention to Milly, who took the earliest opportunity of saying—

"Phyllis does not think he will be here

to-night; she says she is furious, for when Fred, who dined at mess, came back, Captain Glenny had not been heard of since yesterday."

"You know what took him away, which Phyllis does not; nor is she aware of a circumstance which is likely to make him doubly anxious to return."

Frederick Leslie was fortunately more good-natured than his sister; for, when later in the evening, he was dancing with Milly, if ever face plainly betrayed the innocent secret of a most guileless heart, it was the blushing one which advised him that the senior Captain of his regiment was visible in bodily presence, and standing in the door-way. He refrained from bantering, but he could not resist the temptation of watching Milly's endeavours to look unconcerned, or rather not to look that way at all, but ultimately he was merciful, and after whirling her round the room so rapidly that the floor sunk into a dark chasm,

and the ceiling became a moving firmament, he stopped when she least expected it, directly in front of Captain Glenny.

"My good fellow, I began to think you had thrown us over altogether; but as you are come, you may as well make yourself useful."

Captain Glenny assented, but he did not take any more active measures towards this desirable end than to shake hands silently with the possessor of the blushing face.

"You don't mean to dance, then?" enquired his tormentor, upon whose mind a sudden light had flashed respecting his friend's business at C——.

"Not just at present," was the composed reply.

"Very well, then," said Fred mischievously, "I was just going to offer you the privilege of supplying my place with Miss Mildred Gresham, *pro tem*, while I did the civil—but as you are idle—"

Captain Glenny's countenance told him, that he was in no mood for jesting, so with an appearance of unconsciousness, which did credit to his tact and discretion, Mr. Leslie, after apologising to Milly, for his want of ceremony, betook himself to the fulfilment of his duties as a host. It was with a feeling closely akin to dissatisfaction, and nearly approaching to ill-humour, however, that he turned away. The idea of a marriage between his friend and his sister, was, he was surprised to find, particularly distasteful to him; more especially as, for the first time, he became aware that he had been the chief instrument in bringing them together. Why he felt annoyed and vexed, he paused not then to ask, but contented himself with the consolatory reflection that it was the most absurd idea that ever entered any body's head, for Glenny was at least eight-and-thirty, and pretty little Mildred a good twenty years younger. "Such a marriage would be quite preposterous."

Captain Glenny's feelings at that moment had quite as much bitter in them as sweet. He could not but love the little, fluttering, trembling beauty, whom the civilised customs, and polite usages of the nineteenth century, allowed him in the dance to clasp so closely to his heart. He could not but look tenderly into the wistful, anxious eyes, which his prolonged silence had the effect of raising, from beneath the shadow of their deep lashes, with an enquiring gaze. They had so much power over him, that his words were gentle, though an inward storm of anger and fury was even then raging within.

"I cannot speak before all these people; we must get out of this room when the music ceases. There must be a quiet corner somewhere," was his answer to the unspoken question her looks conveyed.

"Tell me one thing," said she, blushing at the sound of her own voice, "did you see papa?"

"I dined at the Deanery yesterday, and, moreover, I called there again to-day, and by waiting till the afternoon to see the Dean, who was engaged in the chapter-house all the early part of the day, I very nearly missed the train. As it was, I had to make my way over from Kingston—I had a presentiment, in spite of your assurances to the contrary that you would be here to-night," concluded he, in the soft tone he knew so well how to use.

In the retired embrasure of a window on the staircase, where unmarred by artificial light, the tranquil stars shone in—those stars, which from their heavenly home, have looked down upon so many ages of human strife and passion, beneath the softening influences of these silent witnesses of the birth and death of centuries of love and hate, which have alike expired, though in their beginning their mortal possessors deemed them too immortal—gazing out into the stilly night, which for the nonce reigned in the old quadrangle, Milly heard

that her forebodings were but too well founded.

Captain Glenny's story was soon told; for she had no voice to ask for particulars, or to interrupt him by questions and remarks. Her spirits had gone down from the moment that she heard his prefatory remark, that his visit had been one of disappointment, the more so that the Dean had raised objections, which he, for his part, had never anticipated. Immediately on his arrival he called at the Deanery. Dr. Gresham was out, but hearing that Mrs. Gresham was at home and alone, he had gone in. She was evidently very much surprised at a visit from an individual whose very name was unknown to her—and in speaking to Milly he dwelt on this fact; for in his present frame of mind, Captain Glenny was almost ready to be offended with her for this omission, but it would have been difficult even for the most irritable of men to feel lasting anger with that little sorrowful, anxious face, on which, until

now, hope and joy had been predominant, growing paler and paler, under his very eyes. How could he look at Milly's expressive countenance and doubt the true cause of her silence respecting himself. He did not, for his manner softened directly.

"Having convinced Mrs. Gresham I was no impostor, I thought I might as well go a little further and tell her what had brought me to C——. I might have been wrong, but I do not think I failed there. I certainly never went on such an errand before," added he, with a satisfied air, "and up to this point I was decidedly successful."

And in the innocence of her heart, Milly felt happy in the belief, engendered by these words, that she was his first and only love. How he came to divine her thoughts is not for us to say, but the recollection of sundry little affairs with which for the last eighteen or twenty years, he, after the manner of men of his calibre, had been wont to amuse himself had

utterly faded away. He believed and spoke as though he really were the model of constancy and devotion which he thought himself, because forsooth the obstacles raised, at that moment, on his path, as it happened, heightened rather than diminished his present matrimonial ardour.

Milly is not the only woman who would have shrunk from the spectacle, could she have truly read but one of the dark pages of the so-called heart of the man she so fondly worshipped. It is the way with women to invest the object of their idolatry with a thousand pure and noble attributes. They judge them by themselves, and happy is it for them, so long as their faith endures; the fruit of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" is little to be desired. The wisdom, Eve coveted of old, has destroyed many a wife's trusting confidence, and stood a ghastly spectre by many a fireside. And what is the consequence? Hearts do not break, but they harden when

they find they have been deceived; even the softest, the gentlest, and the most loving—the slow process that brings with it this moral death, is more to be dreaded, aye, and far more painful too, than the actual rending asunder of soul from body. And were it not ordered otherwise, by a wiser Hand than ours, many a woman might well wish to die when all the high imaginings, and holy reverence for her self-elected human deity, which makes life bright, dies for her.

CHAPTER VIII.

When of old Hildebrand,
I asked his daughter's hand,

Though she blushed and smiled,
I was discarded.

LONGFELLOW.

CAPTAIN GLENNY was right in believing that, at first, Mrs. Gresham had favored his suit. She it was who asked him to dine with them, and talk the matter over with her husband; and who prepared the Dean to receive his would be son-in-law favorably The five minutes which elapsed before dinner was the most satisfactory to both parties. If Captain Glenny had been awkward, which he was not, Dr. Gresham's

more than courteous reception must have reassured him; as it was he was infinitely and uncomfortably oppressed with a sense of his host's superiority, which, incapable of estimating in its true and intellectual light, he was content to ascribe to the fact of his possessing, as he mentally phrased it, "a handle to his name." He laid it all to the Gresham blood, and the "honourable," by courtesy, added to his ecclesiastical titles and patronymic.

To do him justice Captain Glenny was a very fine-looking man—he was very tall, he was very fair, and he, moreover, possessed a redundant moustache and whiskers, a pair of keen blue eyes, and a well-shaped nose and chin; all of which had combined to establish for him, in his own opinion, as in that of the belles of sundry garrison towns, the character of a handsome man. And he possessed, at least in society, what did more for him, with the Dean, than all his good looks or soldier-like bearing—a frank, open, and cordial manner.

So far all was well; but, long before the cloth was removed, Dr. Gresham was beginning to experience some unpleasant doubts. Captain Glenny talked on fearlessly, touching upon all subjects with the utmost confidence and assurance; nothing came amiss to him. He did not know enough to be aware of his own deficiencies on all but general subjects, for he was so accustomed to be treated as an authority in military matters, at mess, that so long as he heard the fluent sound of his own voice it was enough for him. He had not even tact enough to see that he had better leave the Bishop of Exeter and Mr. Gorham alone. He was stout and stalwart enough to fight his country's battles, but he had no part in the church militant, and, every word he said, the very levity of his tone, and his want of respect for the powers that be, even more than his opinions, jarred against the Dean's habitual esteem and reverence for those high in spiritual authority.

Still Dr. Gresham hoped for the best, and

endeavoured to feel resigned to, "the young man's not having very just views on church matters;" as he told himself, repeatedly, "it was not necessary for every soldier to be a theologian."

Mrs. Gresham did her best for him, by changing the conversation from divinity to Dickens; but, as Captain Glenny openly acknowledged that he never looked into a book, or read anything but the *Times*, she felt she did not do much good by the move, and then, too, for the first time, she wondered what Milly could have been thinking of.

Such heroes did not often find their way into the Deanery it is true; but they are common enough in the world at large. Some people, indeed, think it is the prerogative of women only to be weak and ignorant; and believe that it is they alone who are engrossed with trifles, leading a useless existence with no higher moral end than to eat, drink, dress, and get through as best they may, the ordinary

formula that makes up what is commonly called *living*. But how is it with hundreds of the other sex? Even in the *soi-disant* learned professions, who, by their previous training, ought to be exempted from the charge of ignorance, how many, even of their followers, can justly claim this indulgence? And how is it with soldiers, sailors, merchants, and individuals of half-a-dozen other idle callings, or it may be of no calling at all? They can read, and they can write, and, sometimes—but not very often, to judge by the results—they can sum; but who, in reality, have very little more of intellectual culture, and constantly not quite so much sense as the horses they ride, or the dogs that they ill-use.

The Dean is not the only person who has sat aghast at the palpable ignorance, in practical matters, of some of these gentlemen.

Self-satisfied as he was, even Captain Glenny felt a little nervous when left alone with Dr. Gresham; particularly when, by the Dean's

silence, he found that it was left for him to open the subject of his visit. He possessed that degree of external polish which is acquired in the world, and which, at this moment, sufficed to conceal his innate want of any great refinement of feeling, and he expressed himself, under the circumstances, properly enough; as for the time being, Milly certainly occupied all that portion of his affections which were not self-engrossed.

He had set out confident enough of success in his suit; but there was an indescribable something about the Dean, which, when he came to the point, made him feel doubtful. It was not that Dr. Gresham was stiff or pompous; on the contrary, there was a quiet ease, and, what was more, an expectation that his guest should feel so too, which was exactly calculated to excite respect.

Captain Glenny had no small veneration for what he called "swells," but Dr. Gresham's was a style of character with whom he had

never before been thrown; he became dimly conscious that there was an immeasurable distance between himself and the head of the family with which he proposed to ally himself. And he testified his sense of this superiority, by mentioning with great diffidence the amount of his present income, and the sum he could, by his mother's marriage settlements, settle on his wife; he made, moreover, honorable mention of his just expectations from a wealthy father; in fact, he could not but think that a man with Dr. Gresham's manner and address must be rolling in riches—some of those fabulous riches ascribed to the Church. He was quite taken by surprise at the Dean's answer.

"Six hundred a year! It is little less than I began married life on myself, some twenty years ago, when I had no more preferment to expect, and nothing but an insurance on my own life to settle. I was not young then either," added Dr. Gresham, contemplatively; "I had attained my fortieth year."

Captain Glenny announced that he considered that the best age for marrying. He himself should be forty in the course of a few weeks."

"I should not have thought it," replied the Dean, in a tone expressing some surprise. "I should not have imagined you were much more than thirty."

He paused, and Captain Glenny reverted to the monetary part of the transaction.

The Dean interrupted him hastily.

"On the score of money I can make no possible objection. You may not be aware, perhaps, that I can give my daughter no fortune; the utmost I can hope to do for any of my children is to leave enough for them to have, at the outside, between two and three thousand pounds a piece after my death and that of their mother."

Captain Glenny was about to reply, but the Dean, with a gesture, bespoke his silence.

"This may very possibly make some differ-

ence in your views, and I would wish you to think it over before proceeding further."

"No," said Captain Glenny, frankly, and in a manner which did him infinite credit; "I do not say I did not think it possible that your daughter might sooner or later have some little fortune, but I can honestly affirm, that her want of it does not make one iota of difference in my affection for her."

If he had studied what to say, he could not have framed a sentiment likely to raise him higher in the Dean's unworldly estimation. He began to think he might have been too hard in his mental judgment of his qualifications.

"I honour the feeling which prompts so ready a determination. But you must agree with me that money is not the only essential towards a happy marriage."

He waited for a reply, but Captain Glenny held his peace; he mentally wondered "what theold fellow was driving at next."

"It may not, perhaps, seem very gracious, but I think, for your own sake, as well as for my daughter's, it would be wise to consider the great difference in your respective ages. I confess it is difficult to me to look on Mildred as more than a child, and my reason tells me she is but sixteen. Have you thought on the consequences of so unequal an alliance? I do not mean to say," added the Dean, with that smile which was in itself a courtesy, "that you are old, for I really thought you ten years younger than you actually are, but the day will come when years will make themselves felt, and when twenty more have passed, you will in reality be an old man, and your wife a young, and possibly still a pretty woman. I should have thought, flatteringly as you have expressed yourself towards my daughter, that you must have already felt that a difference exists in your thoughts, feelings, and habits."

Captain Glenny thought the benefit was all on his side, and said as much.

"If, when it is represented to her, Miss Gresham does not see it in the light I wish, I must, of course, bow to her decision." He was pretty sure that Milly would think just as he dictated, and this fact on his return he lost no time in ascertaining.

"I am afraid that Milly's judgment is likely to be blinded by her affections, therefore, if you please, that objection shall remain as a subject for future consideration. Nor at the present moment will I pause to consider whether you have those qualities and qualifications which are likely to make my daughter happy. You must pardon me too for saying, that our acquaintance is of such a very recent date, that I should not be justified in giving my consent, even to an engagement, still less to a marriage, until, to speak plainly, I knew something more of the man who asks the hand of my daughter."

Captain Glenny was not particularly pleased; the words rankled eventually, but for the pre-

sent the Dean's manner totally disarmed him. He was rather chary of committing himself, but he did manage to mutter something to the effect that he was afraid, however willing, he could not contrive to grow younger, but that as regarded Dr. Gresham's other objections, he trusted that at at any rate he might hope for a speedy decision and a favourable judgment.

"Do not call these objections," said Dr. Gresham mildly, "I have, I confess, one serious objection, but as yet I have only mentioned those considerations which induce me to defer giving you a decided answer."

"What the deuce——" rose to Captain Glenny's lips, but he remembered himself in time, and begged in more polished terms to know the nature of this objection, and whether it might not be in his power altogether to remove it.

"In your power it certainly is, but I doubt whether I have a right to ask such a sacrifice;

and yet I confess it is painful to me to think of my little Milly being exposed to all the dangerous influences of a roving, barrack life, and of its indiscriminate associations and society. It is not as if she were ten years older, and her character formed."

Captain Glenny did not know much about "forming characters," the very idea was new to him, but he had sense enough to conceal his want of comprehension.

"I should never wish my wife to live in barracks; I quite think with you that it does not do at all for ladies."

"I am glad you see it in the same light," said the Dean cordially.

"It would be a hard case if no officers were to marry," remarked Captain Glenny drily.

"You have me there," said the Dean, who had a keen appreciation of anything like a joke, and did not know Captain Glenny was speaking in sober earnest.

"It is a serious thing for a man to give up

his profession just when he most needs it," proceeded Captain Glenny, following up his advantage.

"Yes, and I feel I cannot expect such a concession at your hands."

"Am I to understand then," said Captain Glenny rather angrily, but still keeping his temper by a great effort, "that you refuse to allow your daughter to marry a soldier?"

The Dean paused and knit his eyebrows in thought, but at last he said—

"No, I certainly do not altogether refuse my consent; I should not be justified in so strong a measure without further consideration; but I require time—time to see how deeply my daughter's feelings are concerned, and to enable me to judge how her ultimate happiness may best be promoted. Say three months, or rather say six months hence; if you are still in the same mind, I shall then be prepared to give a definite answer. Milly is very, very young; she ought to have time

for reflection. Meanwhile I trust we shall see more of you. In December, my eldest son will be at home, and if you would then pay us a visit it would be a satisfaction to both Mrs. Gresham and myself."

Captain Glenny brightened up.

"I shall certainly be most happy to come," repeated he more than once.

"Mind, I do not promise to have my daughters at home; I do not say you shall not see Mildred between this and then; but, till something is decided one way or the other, it would not be consistent on my part to throw her purposely into your society."

Captain Glenny's countenance fell. Throughout the whole of this conversation he had been marvelling at the Dean's sentiments. He could not comprehend them. All his life he had lived with the sort of people who thought getting their daughters married, to anybody with anything like a competency, and more especially to an officer, the great object

to be attained, and here was a man, who confessed that he could make but little provision for his children, debating and demurring, and instead of catching at a proposal of marriage, throwing every imaginable obstacle in the way.

Captain Glenny went into the drawing-room and drank his coffee very thoughtfully, and in spite of all efforts to draw him into conversation, sat almost in total silence for the remainder of the evening. He looked at the old-fashioned, heavy tables, and cumbrous arm-chairs, the dark book-shelves, and red damask curtains, the well worn carpet, and patched sofa-cover, and wondered whether they knew that the furniture in his mother's little boudoir "would buy up the whole lot of them."

The younger branches of the family were gone to bed before he took his leave, and then the Dean said—

"I cannot debar you from the common

chances of meeting my daughter; and it appears to me you have hitherto been very much thrown together. I trust to your honour, however, not to seek her out till such time as I have seen and spoken to her myself. Of course, if you meet by chance, it would be harrowing poor Milly's feelings too much not to allude to what has passed, but I should be glad to see her myself first. Both to-morrow and next day, unfortunately, I am full of business, and cannot leave home, but her mother will probably write to Milly, and the following day I shall certainly run up to Hampton Court for a few hours, when I shall hope to see you again."

Captain Glenny readily promised compliance, and he kept his word in its literal meaning, though how far he acted up to the spirit of Dr. Gresham's injunctions remains to be seen. He was one of those men who cannot bear to be baffled. A night's reflection only made him the more anxious to extract an immediate consent from the Dean, and to this end he

called again on the following day; he even went so far as to offer to sell out and leave the army altogether.

The Dean, on his side, had had the benefit of some hours of deliberation, which had but confirmed him in his original determination; he expressed his sense indeed of the extent of this concession; he even said, "it smoothed the way considerably," but for the rest nothing was gained; he repeated again and again that he "must see his daughter, he could not in conscience pledge himself until he had impressed upon her the importance of the steps he was taking; Captain Glenny must be content to wait."

Captain Glenny was not content, and so it came to pass that he arrived at Hampton Court, and in Mrs. Leslie's drawing-room in the turbulent, and indignant state of feeling to which we have alluded. His resolution was taken, he had thought it over during a long and solitary journey; if he could not prevail with

the Dean, he flattered himself that he had unbounded influence over Milly, and upon the strength of that influence he now built his hopes. To use his own words, "he was in for it, and he would go through with it."

To tell "the whole truth, the sole truth, and nothing but truth," at the beginning of his acquaintance with Milly, Captain Glenny had never for a moment contemplated marrying her. At first sight he had been very much taken by her pretty face and winning manners; it was something quite new to him to fall in with a young lady who did not meet his advances half-way; there was a species of excitement in it which carried him on. He spared no pains in overcoming her innate shyness and reserve, and thanks to Phyllis they became before very long "great friends."

The result was what might have been anticipated; Captain Glenny talked of love, as he had done to a score of other young ladies; it was for her to feel it as the blushing cheek, the

downcast eye, the trembling lip and hand, when they met, even after but a few hours' absence, but too plainly advised him. Still he was only amusing himself, and he would hardly have been at the trouble of winning Milly's affections so entirely, had it not been for the spirit of rivalry, which Phyllis had aroused towards her brother. That urged him on, that was the one great motive, for his unremitting attentions, and untiring pursuit; he would do anything, take any trouble, to get a "pull over Leslie." And to crown the whole, Milly loved him, as he had never before been loved. Say what man will, there is that strange attractive power in true love, when unalloyed by selfishness or passion, that it invariably calls forth some sort of return, inadequate as that return often proves to be. Milly had betrayed her secret almost before she was aware of it herself, and we all know how dangerously sweet and flattering it is, to the pride and self-love of

humanity, to reign as completely master of another's heart as Captain Glenny did of hers. How capable her idol was of appreciating the treasure she had cast at his feet, time and circumstances must show forth.

CHAPTER IX.

Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains.

MILTON.

"If you really loved me, you would not say 'no,'" pleaded Captain Glenny.

"It is not that, you know it is not; but I cannot—indeed I cannot," was the broken answer.

"Why not?"

"It would be so very wrong," faltered Milly.

"I do not see that, but even supposing it were so, do we not all do wrong sometimes? The best of us are liable to error; why even your own father is harsh in his judgment and treatment of me."

"I am sure he does not mean to be unkind," said Milly, against whose sense of right this reasoning jarred, though she knew not how to controvert it.

"Possibly not," said Captain Glenny, who had ere this discovered that openly to impugn her father's motives was not the way to win over the daughter to his own mode of thinking. He did not mean to be unkind to your sister, when he put his veto on her engagement with her cousin. And yet, see what has been the result, according to your own showing. Is she happy?"

"But *you* would not forget me; *you* would not go away and marry any one else," said Milly, in all the artless confidence of a youth which had known no thought of guile.

Hardened man of the world as he was, substituting passion for love, and hardly believing even in the reality of those very qualities and virtues, which had attracted him towards Mildred Gresham, this innocent appeal went straight to

those better feelings, which years of selfishness, sin, and folly had well-nigh smothered, and extinguished. He drew her closer and yet closer towards him.

"Forget you," was his passionate reply, as he pressed her to his heart, "why I cannot even live without you."

"And papa will let us marry some day," whispered she, half-frightened at his caresses, though at the same time she was reassured by his softened tone.

"But I am not content to wait for that indefinite period," persisted he. "I know more of the world than you do, and believe me, in these cases, 'some day' means never; not tom ention that the chances are ten to one that the Dean—for no other reason than because I am in the army—does not refuse his consent altogether. If you would only comply with my wishes, all would go well. I will go to London to-morrow, and get a license; I have an old friend a proctor, and that is easily done; the next morning

when you come out for your walk as usual, we will go up by the railroad to London, and be back here to implore your father's forgiveness by the time he arrives."

"Oh! no, no, no, I could not do it. Neither papa nor mamma would ever get over my running away."

"They would not be angry for long; besides, I do not see that it is running away."

"But it would be deceiving them, and that would be quite as wrong." She could not argue the point, but tears came to her aid.

Captain Glenny had not heard so much about right and wrong since the days when his old nurse had first taught him to clasp his hands in prayer. His mother's only care had been that he should learn to be a gentleman; his father's, that he should get on in the world; little wonder was it then, that he could not comprehend Milly's affection and veneration for her parents, that he should think it over-strained! He by no means entered into

these qualms of conscience; still he could not bear to see her shed such bitter tears.

"Milly, my dear little Milly, they could not blame you," said he, soothingly, as he kissed away the drops which fell like summer rain. "I will bear their reproaches, for I alone shall have been in fault, if it is a fault at all. Come, do not cry any more, there's a good girl."

Milly did her best to obey this injunction, for Captain Glenny, who was on tenter hooks lest any heated, wearied dancers should invade their cool retreat, had contrived to inspire her with a slight share of his own respect for the conventionalities of society.

"Now we will not distress ourselves any more about it, but discuss the matter rationally," said he, softly, "the question is whether you love me well enough to sacrifice your own prejudices for my sake. If you cared for me as much as I do for you, you would be glad to marry quietly and not have all the fuss of a wedding."

He had hitherto found that feigning to doubt her affection, playing in fact upon her feelings, was the line of policy most likely to insure her consent, but this time he had gone a little too far.

Milly did not turn away her head, nor did she appear to heed the implied reproach, but raising her childish face, glowing with such a look as had never beamed there before, though tears still trembled in her eyes, she said, with a firmness which surprised him—

"Do not speak of it again. If you had known but half the grief my cousin Lionel's clandestine marriage had cost his parents, I am sure you would not ask me to do the same. I—I could not." Her voice broke down altogether, she was incapable of proceeding.

The strange thing was, Captain Glenny did not feel the least provoked, though he was astonished at her opposition, as well he might, for he knew nothing of that strength with

which early education and sound religious principles endows even the most weak and fragile.

"Well," said he, in a tone of fond complaint, more trying to her than the outburst of anger she had dreaded. "I will say no more about it now; to-morrow perhaps, when the idea is not so new to you, you may think differently."

She shook her head mournfully.

"I have one thing more to say," proceeded he. "It is very probable, indeed almost certain that my regiment will be ordered on foreign service in the spring; we are pretty sure to be sent to the Cape to fight the Kaffirs, if not to India, to replace the men who have already died at Burmah. You will not let me go alone and brave all the perils of war, and wounds, of sickness and of death, without my little wife to comfort and console me?"

He had, as he mentally phrased it, "hit the right nail on the head." This dismal picture

was too much for poor Milly's fortitude; she flung herself into the arms extended to receive her, she clung to him as if the moment of separation were already at hand.

"I thought you could not so cruelly requite all my love and affection," whispered he, in the honeyed tones he knew so well how to use, and which went so straight to that soft and guileless heart. "Now let me hear one little 'yes,' to re-assure me—give me some sign," urged he, finding she was really too much agitated to articulate, for he was anxious to extract a promise before she had time to reflect. Ere Milly could give utterance to the sentiments which rose to her lips, footsteps were heard descending the stairs, and with a bound she had released herself from her lover's grasp, and retreated into the opposite corner of the embrasure, before Phyllis raised the muslin curtain which hung across the deep recess. A glance told her the state of affairs, but she

was merciful enough to give vent to no teasing words; her face alone spoke volumes.

"Milly," said she, "I want you, to come with me, your sister is looking for you everywhere; Miss Courtenay has played her last rubber. You," added the manœuvrer, turning to Captain Glenny, who was endeavouring to look unconscious and unconcerned, and biting her lip to repress a mocking smile, "you had better keep out of the way for the present, go down to supper."

"So, Miss Prudery," resumed Phyllis, sarcastically, when they were left alone, "*you* who lecture me by the hour for flirting—*you*, I say, do not see any harm in spending above an hour with a gay dragoon, on the staircase. Fred is furious about it, and says it is all my fault."

Milly was incapable alike of any reply, or self justification, and finding she did not answer, Phyllis turned sharply round; by this

time they had come under the lamp which hung in the dimly lighted old passage.

"Good gracious, child, what is the matter? You are not quite such a baby as to cry for my scoldings," said she, in astonishment, and somewhat more kindly, as she scanned Mildred's agitated features and tearful eyes, "you can't go into the drawing-room with that face," added she, as she opened the door of her own room, and pushed Milly in before her.

Phyllis had energy and sense enough, but it was all wasted on trivialities. She lighted a candle, she made her victim bathe her eyes, and before five minutes had elapsed, she was *au fait* of the whole affair, except indeed of the proposed elopement.

"Why could not you have told me this yesterday," was her comment, "for I suppose Captain Glenny proposed on Monday, after you left Fred and myself."

Milly assented to this fact.

"He must have been pretty quick about it," remarked her inquisitor, "for it was not three minutes' walk to your home."

"We took a few turns under the cloisters in the Fountain Court," said Milly, blushing, on finding she must come to confessions.

"Ah, I suspected as much, but we must not stay here talking all night," returned Phyllis. "Let me look at you; that's not much of a ball-room face! Really people who think of marrying ought not to be so childish as to cry about it. I wonder what Captain Glenny means by taking such a baby for his wife. There, child, do not begin again, for goodness sake. Well, I see I must fetch Di, it is to be hoped she knows how to manage you, for I do not. By-the-way," added she, pausing at the door, "if I encounter Miss Courtenay, I shall say you have got a return of your headache, so you need not contradict me."

Di could, to a certain extent, soothe the perturbed young spirit, but she had no power to obliterate the tell-tale traces of emotion, and at the first mention of going home, Milly caught at the idea, as if there were calm and peace in the very name. Miss Courtenay did not quite like going so early, while so many of her contemporaries were still adorning the rout benches; but Di ultimately prevailed, and she left the rooms with her aunt, marvelling, as well she might, what possible pleasure the aged wearers of those radiant head-dresses could find in sitting there hour after hour, looking on, it is true, but taking no part in the amusements of the evening, the half of them, at all events, having no young relations for whose sake to sacrifice themselves. Society, as they themselves would have told her, being the object, the poor attraction which brought and kept them there.

Captain Glenny was on the watch, and joined Milly so soon as he had seen Fred

Leslie give his arm to Miss Courtenay; another of the military fraternity did himself "The honour of escorting Miss Gresham" across the Quadrangle, and sentimentalized about the moon by the way; his pretty speeches were lost upon Di, however, for her whole attention was concentrated upon her sister, who she momentarily feared would betray her nervousness before Miss Courtenay.

Even Captain Glenny seemed to have forgotten all thought of caution, and was urging some point with, as she thought, unnecessary vehemence. His last words puzzled her beyond measure.

"No," said he eagerly, "you have pledged yourself; I cannot let you take back your promise."

She forgot all about it; nevertheless, in listening to her sister's version of his reception by their parents, and a letter from Mrs. Gresham to herself the next morning, drove it quite out of her head. The worst of it was, she was

forbidden to show that letter to her sister, which prohibition, soften it down as she might, heightened Milly's distress and forebodings ten-fold; not to mention that it caused herself no inconsiderable annoyance and perplexity, for after stating her own opinion of Captain Glenny, which had suddenly fallen below zero, and expressing the Dean's more moderate sentiments, her mother went on to beg that Di would write instantly, giving all particulars of Milly's introduction and acquaintance with that gentleman, as well as her own and her aunt's opinion of his character and position. She might possibly have found courage and resolution to evade Mrs. Gresham's request, had not her father added a line in the envelope to the effect that he should expect to receive her answer before he left home on the following day.

Everything that morning seemed to go wrong. Miss Courtenay graciously excused Milly's non-appearance at breakfast, but at luncheon time, finding that though nothing

would persuade Milly to leave her room, she did not forbid her to tell her secret, and knowing that if she did not speak openly to-day, the Dean's arrival would be such a surprise on the morrow, Di broke the matter to her aunt.

Because Miss Courtenay took it quietly at first—she being literally surprised into silence —was no reason why she should not be very angry when she came to think it over. She hardly knew with whom she was most indignant, with Milly, or with Captain Glenny; with the Leslies, or with Di; but it did not much matter who was in fault, or whether anybody was in fault at all, her niece had to bear the burden of her wordy wrath, and bear it too with patience.

"Yes, yes," repeated the outraged spinster, "of course you are right, and I am wrong; young people are always wiser than their elders nowadays; but mark my words, no good will ever come of this marriage."

Once more Di strove to allay the storm;

but Miss Courtenay chose to be angry, and would not listen to reason.

"You need not apologise; I do not wish to hear any more about it; all I have to say is, that as Miss Mildred does not choose to come down, she had better keep her room till her father arrives to take her off my hands; I wish to have nothing more to do with her."

Di was really angry now; she thought her sister ill-used, and it was with a great effort that she kept her temper; reason told her it was no use adding fuel to the flames already kindled; still it was a great relief when she heard the door bell ring, which gave her an excuse for leaving the room.

It was Phyllis Leslie; Miss Courtenay did not choose to see her, and sent to say she was engaged, so that young lady being anything but backward, went to their own room in search of the sisters.

Di had just announced Miss Courtenay's sentence of banishment from her presence to

Milly, and was expressing her sense of its injustice, when Phyllis entered. The events of the preceding evening had, in some measure, drawn Di towards their visitor, who really had shown a very sufficient amount of consideration for Milly, and for once in her life Di felt and testified a good deal of cordiality in her reception of Miss Leslie; for, to confess the truth, our heroine had hitherto been most cold and distant in her bearing towards Phyllis; it was not in her nature to be cordial towards people she neither liked nor esteemed.

As it was, Phyllis rather outraged her sense of refinement by immediately beginning to talk about Captain Glenny; she did not feel at all disposed to discuss her father's conduct in the matter, and soon bethought herself of some excuse for leaving the friends together, but not before she had heard that Captain Glenny had called on the Leslies directly after breakfast, on purpose to leave a message with Phyllis for Milly, to the effect that he was

gone to London for the day to make the arrangements which he had mentioned to her the evening before. It never for a moment struck Di that any further evil could result from Phyllis' companionship; but, on the contrary, she felt quite glad that Milly should have somebody to talk with while she went down to write the necessary epistle to Mrs. Gresham, which duty had already been driven off till the last possible moment of being in time for the post.

Truly that letter was a difficult task, and what with Miss Courtenay's unreasonable abuse of Captain Glenny, which had taken the very contrary effect to that she had intended, and Milly's tears, it ended in Di's being led to express herself more decidedly, as well as more warmly, in his behalf, than she would have done even the day before, or if circumstances had allowed her to judge dispassionately and calmly.

One comfort was, Milly was entirely satisfied

with those parts of her letter, which she repeated to her. "Whatever happens," said she "I shall at least have the consolation of thinking that both you and Phyllis appreciate Captain Glenny."

Di did not feel particularly flattered at being thus classed with Miss Leslie, whom in her heart she despised, though she was angry with herself for harbouring such a feeling. She felt vexed because upon her return, Phyllis, who had been talking loud and eagerly, stopped abruptly the moment she entered the room, and in a confused and disconnected manner, began to complain of the heat and to abuse the weather. Milly, too, looked annoyed, and seemed relieved when at last her friend departed, but she said nothing, which made Di the more certain that Phyllis had been guilty of some indiscretion, though she knew not what.

CHAPTER X.

" Oft expectation fails, and most oft there
Where most it promises ———"

SHAKSPEAR.

OUR heroine was more than astonished next morning, when at the early hour of nine, just as she was making tea, her accustomed task when with her aunt, the door opened, and her brother Frank walked in unannounced. Since his regiment had been quartered at the Tower, he had repeatedly come down for the day, but he generally gave them notice of this intention, and moreover, he had certainly never before arived in time for breakfast. His first words were—

"Where is Milly?"

"In her room," returned Di, in some surprise, "Miss Courtenay has forbid—"

Her brother did not give her time to proceed.

"Are you sure she is safe up stairs?"

"She was not dressed, when I left her there three minutes ago," answered Di, who in the midst of her surprise remembered that her father, brother, and uncle, one and all, were equally prone to exact a direct answer to a simple question.

"So far so good. The next thing is to keep her there."

"Miss Courtenay has already condemned her to remain a prisoner till the arrival of my father; but I should have thought you, Frank, would have been the last person to justify so harsh a measure," said Di, reproachfully.

"You don't mean that it has got wind already—that my aunt knows it?" exclaimed her brother, in a tone of vexation.

"I told Miss Courtenay yesterday, after I

had written to you; I thought she must know it sooner or later. My aunt would have been so hurt if she had heard nothing of Milly's engagement till my father arrived to-day," answered Di, deprecatingly.

"Engagement!" repeated Frank; "yes, of course, you told her that; but I have other news, which I think will surprise you, Di, the bare hint of which, in fact, brought me here at this unusual hour. I am only glad that I have arrived in time."

"In time," repeated Di; "what do you mean, Frank?"

"That I hope to be able to prevent Milly from taking a step which one day or other she will bitterly repent."

The blood rushed to his sister's face.

"Oh! Frank," exclaimed she, hastily. "surely, you are not prejudiced enough to object to Captain Glenny because his father is in business. And as to his being in the army

poor Milly was depending on your overruling papa's objections on that score."

"I do not object to the marriage; I should never have dreamed of interfering, if everything had been fair and above board," returned her brother; "but what I do think is, that a fellow cannot be worth much who would take advantage of any girl's youth and inexperience to persuade her to elope with him."

A flat contradiction of any such probability having entered either Captain Glenny's or her sister's head rose to Di's lips; but ere it was uttered, a sudden light flashed across her mind. Could this be the promise upon which Captain Glenny had insisted in her hearing? and could this be the arrangement to which he had alluded? and what was more, was this the solution of Phyllis's mysterious communications, and Milly's consequent dejection? She turned red and white by turns.

Frank was intently watching her changes

of countenance, which for once he read amiss.

"You do not believe it, Di—you are angry with me for even suggesting such an idea; but only listen."

Di did listen, and heard what grieved her to the heart.

"—— gave some of our fellows a dinner yesterday—there were no ladies present—and consequently, in the evening, there was more wine drank than usual, or otherwise I conclude that Travers, who has just exchanged out of the —— dragoons, would never have repeated what was told him in confidence. I hardly know the fellow by sight; but he was talking of an elopement which was to come off on the morrow. Some friend of his, who was quartered at Hampton Court, was to run off with a pretty little girl of sixteen, whose name he did not mention, but whose father, being a parson, objected to her marrying a man who was in the army. He was pleased to be very

witty on that score," said Frank, as superciliously as though Mr. Travers were again ridiculing his father before his very face. "But I did not pay much attention to the story, I was in a hurry to get back to the Tower before the gates were locked. At the moment I had not the smallest idea that I could have any interest in the fact of these lovers intending to come up to London by the ten o'clock train, to get married before any one suspected their purpose. When I reached my room, your letter of yesterday was lying on the table—the moment I read it, directly I heard of Milly's engagement, the whole thing came back to my mind. Glenny was the name mentioned. It was as clear as day."

"Milly never would have consented to run away," interposed Di, whose pale face bore testimony to the emotion with which she had listened to his narrative, "never!"

Frank shook his head.

"You don t know how this fellow may have played upon her feelings. She is so warm-

hearted and yielding, that it is more than likely that he may have wrung a promise of the kind from her."

"It is difficult to believe it possible."

"At first sight, it did not seem probable; but I have had some hours of reflection—time to make up my mind, as well as to arrange my plans. I first thought of going back to Travers, but it would have been of no use, even if I could have done it; he would have told me nothing more. So I made up my mind to come down here at once. I was aware, thanks to his indiscretion, that the culprits were, as he phrased it, only going to walk off after breakfast."

Di's distress of mind had hitherto made her quite oblivious of the fact that Miss Courtenay might come down at any moment. Frank had but just remembered this same probability, and was about, though rather needlessly, to impress the necessity of silence and secresy on his sister, when her maid appeared with the information, that as her mistress had passed a

very restless night, Miss Gresham was not to wait breakfast, as she should not be down just yet.

That was a relief, though Di was well aware that this portended an increased amount of irritability and anger, on her aunt's part, nurtured and fostered by reflection during the waking hours of the night. Now this seemed but a minor evil, compared with the fears her brother had excited: she could not, and she would not believe it true, and, above all things, she dreaded the speaking to Milly; she shrunk from giving her pain. Frank was too kind to urge her; but he pointed out the necessity for immediate action.

"I would not for worlds upbraid or reproach her," said he; "but something must be done. I certainly might go and see Captain Glenny myself; but, by rights, Milly ought to have the opportunity of exculpating herself even if she cannot altogether clear him. I quite agree with you, that Captain Glenny may have

planned, and Miss Leslie have aided and abetted; but it is hardly likely that Milly should have lent herself to a line of action so inconsistent with her general character. And if this is the case, she is, as you say, more sinned against than sinning."

This argument prevailed. Di rose, with an effort, it is true, and led the way in silence. In the narrow passage, which led to her sister's room, they met Marie; she had a note in her hand, which, on seeing them, she slipped into her pocket.

Mr. Gresham stopped.

"Give me that note," said he, quietly.

The girl hesitated, turned very red, and finally answered, in broken English—

"I haf no note for you, sare."

"Not for me; but the one Miss Mildred has just given you," replied he, in the same impassive manner.

She handed him a note, addressed to Miss Leslie; his keen eyes detected a little air of

triumph in her countenance; she, moreover, made an attempt to pass him.

He held out his hand.

"The other, if you please."

Somewhat to his own surprise, he received that which he demanded. It was a random shot; but, true enough, there was a note for Captain Glenny, blurred and blotted—Di thought with tears—but in Milly's handwriting.

Frank laid a detaining hand on his sister's arm, as she was about to open the door.

"Look here."

She did not answer; but the rigid, fixed expression which came over her already pale face, spoke volumes.

There was little need for the brother to accuse, or for the sister to excuse. Frank had hardly introduced the purpose of his hurried visit, ere all was confessed; and, with a burst of emotion, Milly had flung herself into his arms.

"I said I could not run away—I told Phyllis yesterday I never would—he made a mistake—indeed, indeed, it was all a mistake," gasped she, in conclusion, to a not very coherent statement of facts.

Di, who had stood as motionless, and with a face almost as deathlike as a marble statue, during her brother's first low-toned reproaches, and Milly's far more bitter self-accusations, now took her sister's hand. Her lips quivered, and tears rose to her eyes.

"I was sure it was so; I knew you would never have been induced to take such a step, whatever persuasions might have been used," said she, fondly.

This demonstration of affection opened Milly's heart, and all her hoarded sorrows were poured forth. Nothing was concealed now.

She might speak of her lover as perfection, but the brother and sister listened in sorrowful amazement. Captain Glenny, in their eyes,

was by no means the immaculate, high-souled being, Milly so fondly believed him.

Frank was turning to leave the room, when he remembered the intercepted letters.

"You must forgive me, Milly," said he, kindly, "for believing, even for an instant, that you would yield to temptation. Still I was afraid that if they reached their destination, these letters might excite hopes, which I was sure, upon reflection, you would be incapable of realising."

Frank, whose love for his sister, and kindly feeling towards his step-mother, were sadly at variance with the harsh judgments he had heard men of the world pronounce upon the sex in general; Frank, who, at one-and-twenty, had seen—if the seeming contradiction may be permitted to stand—too much, and yet not enough, of men and women, in the relation they assume towards each other in society, altogether to understand the working of the feminine mind and heart, had misjudged Milly.

He had ascribed to her feelings and impulses totally at variance with her simple, single-minded character, into which error the circumstances which had come to his knowledge had betrayed him. He had fully expected to find her a participator in Captain Glenny's projects, and had anticipated no small difficulty in bringing her to a right mind.

And now, when he heard that the very letters, which he had thought the greatest proof of her guilt, had been written to express her determination of abiding by her father's decision, and to entreat Captain Glenny to be patient, he was sorely puzzled how to act. Like most very generous and very young men, the very fact of having misjudged her, even in thought, induced him to run into the opposite extreme, and Di was both surprised and grieved to hear him pledge himself to Milly that her father should never hear from him of the revelations and disclosures of the morning.

It is an acknowledged fact, that a girl in her teens is older, for her age, than a boy who has existed during the same number of years. Di was only nineteen, her brother one-and-twenty; at the present moment she was infinitely his superior in practical sense and judgment, if not in that intellect and those attainments which already promised well for his future. For the last two years Frank had been living in the vortex of society, and while gaining knowledge of the world, had been losing many of his higher aspirations and nobler instincts. His sister, the while, had been studying a lesson whose value is but little appreciated, namely, that education of the mind, which enables its possessor to estimate things at their real value, and tends towards a higher standard of self-judgment, than that by which mankind in general are content to abide, No mere teaching gives this mental culture; in silence, and in quiet, and but too often in sorrow and in suffering, it comes to us. In

the din of action, in the whirl and bustle that makes up life, it is often unheeded, unsought, even by those few who have minds to cultivate.

Frank, in his pseudo worldly wisdom, rejoiced that the *eclat* of an elopement had been avoided. Di was grieved to the heart that it had ever been contemplated. It had lowered Captain Glenny in her estimation. She could not think well of the man, who could wish the woman he would make his wife lightly to break the ties which bound her to her home, and in becoming his, to cast the love, honor, and obedience due to her parents, to the winds of heaven. How could he keep faith, who himself held none towards others? How could he expect his wife to respect her marriage vows, if she prefaced the taking on herself the duties of wedded life by breaking the only commandment sanctified by a promise?

She therefore remonstrated; she could not bring herself openly to state those reasons,

which must wound Milly's feelings, but she did say that her father ought not to be kept in ignorance of what had passed. If Frank had had time to reflect, he, most probably, would have viewed it in the same light, but Milly's constant, flowing tears, her utter misery, and appealing looks, so melted him, that he would, at the moment, have promised anything for the sake of seeing her once more her happy little self; and he set himself with hearty good will to the task of over-ruling Di's conscientious scruples. He silenced, if he did not altogether convince her. From her earliest childhood Di had been in the habit of yielding to her brother, and she now accorded that to affection which she could not grant to reason, for she could not but be conscious that if her father knew all, it would most certainly confirm him in his already half-formed intention of withholding his consent to her sister's marriage.

Frank went down stairs to send the notes, which he had detained, but which now Di

entreated him to despatch immediately, seeing that they had already been delayed upwards of two hours, and, in her opinion, they must eventually place her sister's conduct in a much better light in the eyes of those who had endeavoured to mislead her. One effort more she would fain have made to induce Milly to be perfectly open with her father, but even that opportunity the fates denied her, for Milly was in no state at this moment to listen either to reason or remonstrance; the only thing that now remained was to sooth and calm her, for she thought her father would be horrified, and beyond measure distressed, if he found her in this deplorable condition. Miss Courtenay too claimed her attention, for as soon as she had risen, she sent for her niece, to commune with her touching Frank's advent, and kept her with her for a whole hour, until she talked herself into better humour with the world in general.

Dr. Gresham arrived, and, to Miss Courte-

nay's no small disappointment, entered into no discussion on the subject of Milly's engagement. He listened to all that lady had to say, but as she remembered, on reflection, "expressed no opinion himself;" nor did he commit himself in the least.

The only remark he did make was, that "under the circumstances, he had better go and call on Captain Glenny, than make an appointment with him there," which was quite a blow to his sister-in-law, who, although she had been very severe in her strictures on Captain Glenny and the Leslies, in her heart very much enjoyed the prospect of a little excitement, in the way of consultations, &c.

He was a little influenced in this decision by the sight of Milly. The force of habit enabled her to come down the instant her father sent for her, and she went through the meeting with more fortitude than Di had expected. A glance at that innocent face, which, like a flower, still bore traces of the storm

which had passed over it, was enough to resolve the Dean on the course he ought to pursue. Home would be the best place for Milly, for he observed that not only did Miss Courtenay's sharp tones make her start every time she spoke, but when he kissed her, perhaps more fondly than usual, the very kindness of his manner almost upset her assumed tranquillity.

Home, on the following day, Milly accordingly accompanied her father. Di longed to go with them, but Miss Courtenay would not hear of parting from her so suddenly. It had originally been settled that she should stay with her till Frank got his leave in December, and, selfishly fond, she would not let her niece depart a day sooner.

CHAPTER XII.

Does she love the boy who kneeling
Brings to her his youth,
With its passionate, deep feeling,
With its hope, its truth?
No! his hour has passed away!
He has had his day!

L. E. L.

In accordance with the Dean's advice, Lord Stanford had recalled his son. There had been some delay, owing to the irregularities of foreign posts, and Lord and Lady Stanford had been settled at Sutton Priors for six weeks and more, before the letter came which apprised them that Lionel and his wife were actually in London, and that they might be expected on the morrow.

The morrow came, and the twilight hour found Lord Stanford pacing up and down his wife's dressing-room, with impatient strides. It was his custom so to do when anything weighed upon his mind. The clang of the gong, in the hall below, broke a silence of some minutes' duration.

"Half-past six," said he, pausing to consult his watch. "They can hardly be here now by this train." He was nervously anxious for his son's arrival, though he dreaded seeing him again. He was half afraid the bride might think proper to enact a scene, which, of all things in the world, he most disliked.

Lady Stanford reminded him that this train was very often behind its time.

Just at that moment, the grating of wheels, and barking of dogs, proclaimed an arrival.

"Do go down and meet them, Stanford," said her ladyship, imploringly.

He complied with her request; and five

minutes of suspense followed; then the door opened softly, and Lionel had flung himself on his knees by his mother's sofa, and was clasped in her arms.

She covered his head and face with kisses; she held him back to see how much more manly her darling had grown, and had embraced him once more, before she thought of looking round for his wife.

"Where is she, Lionel?" said she, in her usual gentle tones.

Lord Stanford answered in his coldest manner—

"Gone up to dress."

Lionel blushed crimson beneath his embrowned complexion.

"Florence thought you would prefer seeing me alone, mother."

Lady Stanford tried to conceal her disappointment. She saw her son was vexed.

"You must bring her in here, before you go down, Lionel," said she, kindly; "for I am

afraid I shall not be able to appear at dinner to-day."

"You are not suffering, mother?" said he, anxiously. "You are not at all worse, I hope?"

"No; but any little excitement brings on my palpitation; if I lie quiet for an hour, I shall be able to sit up, and come down in the evening."

Lionel had been so accustomed all his life to his mother's being an invalid, that he had never thought about her looking ill. Now, the traces of suffering, which had been imprinted on her sweet, pale countenance for years, struck him painfully after his lengthened absence. He turned away to hide his emotion.

Stern as he was, Lord Stanford had a very warm heart.

"She will be better now she has got you back again, Lionel," said he, kindly. "When

you were a boy, at Eton, your mother always rallied in the holidays; and retrograded during the remainder of the year."

And, moreover, he softened so far, after Lionel left the room, as to say, in answer to his wife's anxious questions regarding their daughter-in-law—

"That Mrs. Gresham carried herself remarkably well." Which was a great deal of praise, considering who uttered it.

Lady Stanford was quite at a loss to reconcile all she had heard of her son's wife, with her appearance when she saw her.

Lady Vaughan, as her mother chose to call herself—notwithstanding the fact that if her first husband had lived but three weeks longer, the bill for their divorce would have passed, and she have lost all right to his name—was a person whom all the travelled English knew by reputation; and Miss Russell's flirtations were the first thing remarked on by those who had met her. Common report proclaimed her to be one who was more than likely to follow in

her mother's footsteps, so soon as any man could be found deluded enough to make her his wife. No foreigner would marry a girl without money, particularly one who had already made herself so much talked about, and whose doings were in every body's mouth. The worst of it was, Miss Russell had already been engaged to one or two rich, and, probably, foolish young Englishmen, by whom she had as often been jilted. Lady Stanford, who had heard all this, consequently pictured her to herself as not only a very syren in attractions, but extremely beautiful, and was proportionately disappointed when she saw her.

Mrs. Gresham was more like a foreigner than an Englishwoman. She was not much above the middle height; but a long and very slender waist made her appear taller than she really was; and on this occasion, as on all others, her dress was the very *acmè* of Parisian art—an elaborate simplicity being, for the nonce, the order of the day; than which no style is more

costly—as some very heavy bills at Palmyre's could have testified, which were destined as a pleasant little surprise for Lionel, in due course of time.

Her complexion was of that indistinct hue verging on the sallow—which is the general prerogative of French ladies, and for which they may thank their habitual tight lacing. It looked its best by candle-light, and was much improved by a *soupçon* of rouge. Her hair, which was neither dark nor light, was turned back off her face, so as not only to shew the large circular ear-rings she habitually wore, but the greater part of the member they were supposed to adorn.

The shape of her face was not altogether bad, but if Mrs. Gresham had a very narrow escape of being pretty, it was quite as near a chance that she had not turned out downright ugly. Her eyes, which were the pedestal on which she based all her claims to good looks, were [redacted] and dark, of no describable color—neither

grey, violet, deep blue nor black; but they were the only really good feature in her face; and when she spoke, which was but seldom, she turned them full on the person she addressed with an expression which she well knew how to render soft or imploring, tender, animated, or reproachful. It was long before Lady Stanford discovered the want in those magnificent eyes; they were always in action, they were never cast down; or, as a German writer has it, never turned *inwards*, to look into her own heart, to try, test, and scan her own thoughts, words, and works.

The lower part of Mrs. Gresham's face was decidedly unpleasing—it was rendered so by the under jaw protruding slightly, so that the lower teeth clasped over, instead of under, the upper; the mouth was large, wide, and unmanageable; and when she spoke, her lips receded, leaving plainly visible two rows of large white teeth. A better physiognomist than Lady Stanford must have augured ill of both heart and character from that mouth, whereas she was far

more taken by her daughter-in-law's very quiet and composed manner. Nothing destroyed Mrs. Gresham's *aplomb*, even under the very trying circumstances of reconciliation and forgiveness, she testified not the smallest discomposure; but behaved as if nothing particular had happened. Had she been a mere chance visitor, to depart on the morrow, she could not have comported herself with more indifference.

During the lapse of more than two years, Lionel had grown from a boy into a man. When he left England, his black hair, arched eyebrows, long eyelashes, regular features, and pink and white complexion, had combined to make him almost effeminately beautiful. He had come back not nearly so pretty, but much better looking. His forehead was as white as ever; but the rest of his face had been tanned by the hot suns of France and Italy, and the winds of Switzerland and the Tyrol, into a rich, hardy, brown, glowing with red on the cheeks, while the novel addition of a dark pair of

whiskers, and a very unpretending moustache, which, nevertheless rather distressed his father, made him look much older than he really was.

Otherwise he was very much the same as ever. As a boy, he had been possessed of the most variable, as well as the most excitable temperament. One day, or one hour, saw him in the highest imaginable state of spirits and hilarity, the next found him sunk in the lowest depths of despondency. Time had not changed him in this respect. For the first few days he had been rather subdued than low-spirited; he was evidently conscious, if his wife was not, that he had been guilty of a very grace less act; and his father's pointed avoidance of all discussion on the subject of his marriage, had but heightened his sense of shame. Gradually, however, the joy of being again at home, the zest of returning to his old pursuits — for Lionel was a most inveterate sportsman—had

restored him to himself; and Lady Stanford rejoiced to see him almost as enthusiastic as ever, over the number of brace he had shot, or the run he had had with the hounds.

This frame of mind lasted so long, that she began to flatter herself that he had grown out of the low spirits, which, as a child, she had vainly striven to teach him to resist. It was no such thing. A day came when it was too rainy to shoot, and when the hounds were reposing in their kennel, so in the afternoon Lionel, having decided it was a shame to take out a horse in such weather, announced that he should walk down to the village, he had not been there since his return. It was dark, when some hours later he walked into his mother's dressing-room, and sat himself down in front of the fire.

"How horribly you smell of smoke," said his wife graciously, from the depths of an arm-chair, where she had been lounging ever since the waning-light had forced her to lay aside

the perusal of one of George Sand's fictions, which, however, she was careful not to lay down, lest Lady Stanford should look into it, and detect the nature of her studies.

"My dear Lionel, are you not wet?" asked his mother anxiously.

"I don't think it rained," rejoined he absently, roused by that familiar voice, but not in the least aware of what he was saying.

Lights were brought in, and there was a a little bustle about—closing shutters, and drawing curtains. Florence opened her book again, after one searching glance directed towards her husband, but Lady Stanford remained sadly watching her son's downcast, clouded face, and drooping attitude. The old troubled look was there testifying of a spirit that was preying upon itself. The wet was dripping from his coat on to the floor, but he heeded it not.

"You really will catch cold," urged his mother.

"Lionel is in the dolefulls," remarked his wife, looking fixedly at him for a moment, as she turned over a page.

"Do persuade him to go and dress Florence," said Lady Stanford.

"It is no use saying anything to him when he is in this sort of humour," answered her daughter-in-law carelessly.

Lady Stanford made another effort. This time she carried her point, and Lionel went off to make a fresh toilet.

"You had better change your humour with your dress," remarked his wife sarcastically, but in the most soft and gentle voice, as he passed her chair.

"I did hope that Lionel had grown out of these attacks of melancholy," remarked Lady Stanford, as the echo of his tread died away down the long corridor; and, after pausing a moment in the vain hope that Florence would follow and soothe him, she added, "As a boy, he was very subject to them."

"They rather increase upon him," answered his wife, who, strange to say, was always the person to blame him, and to point out his faults, though so quietly that it was difficult to decide whether she was aware of this habit, or whether it were a mere chance.

"Or, at any rate, they have been of constant recurrence since I married. Before that, I only saw him in society, and was, therefore, no judge as to the state of his spirits."

"Have you ever spoken to him, or tried to reason with him on the subject?" asked Lady Stanford, rather shocked by her daughter-in-law's indifference.

"I used to tease him at first, and make him go into society with me, whether he liked it or not; but it only made him worse; so now when the fit is on him I take no notice of him at all. I go my way, and let him indulge his passion for solitude. He always comes round in a day or two."

Lady Stanford's thoughts involuntarily re-

curred to one who had exercised a far different influence over her son. As a little girl, and when her cousin's variable temper had been treated as naughtiness, and punished accordingly, Diana would follow Lionel about, and never rest till she had induced him to say he was sorry, and later still, a word, a look, a glance from her had been sufficient to recall him to his better self, to charm away his melancholy.

"It is most unfortunate," sighed his mother.

"It is really very disagreeable," said his wife, "a sullen temper is of all others the most difficult to cope with."

"I do not call Lionel's a sullen temper," said Lady Stanford sadly, "that implies anger conceived, and resentment nurtured against some individual, and my poor boy is only at war with himself. I wish I knew the cause of his depression," proceeded she, "there is generally something weighing on his mind, from which his sensitive nature causes him to

suffer with tenfold power. Will he not tell you, Florence, what has disturbed him ?"

Mrs. Gresham shook her head.

"We should only argue, and, perhaps, quarrel if I attempted to talk him out of it. I assure you, Lady Stanford, he is better left to himself."

Lady Stanford was not quite of the same opinion; but she would not pursue the conversation, for Florence's light manner of treating this very painful subject distressed her immeasurably. She longed for an opportunity of speaking to her son, but there was no hope of seeing him alone that evening, and on the morrow the cloud, she trusted, would have passed away.

Like all invalids, Lady Stanford was never very much on the alert in the morning; it was generally noon before she left her room, and on the following day she was so sure that Lionel would go out hunting, and, as had often been the case before, gallop away his cares, that no-

thing but the mere pleasure of mentioning his name, made her say to her attendant—

"I was asleep, I suppose, when Mr. Gresham went off this morning, for I never heard him come to the door to say 'good-bye.' "

"Mr. Gresham did not go, my lady."

"Not go? Why I thought the hounds met at Cudham."

"Yes, my lady, and Mr. Gresham's horses went on this morning, before daybreak; but he changed his mind. Mrs. Gresham only went with my lord."

"Is Mrs. Gresham gone?" said Lady Stanford, in a tone of amazement.

"Yes, my lady, I heard Collins say it seemed quite a surprise to my lord when Mrs. Gresham came down to breakfast at eight o'clock."

Lady Stanford did not choose to show any annoyance even before her own maid.

"Yes, of course, Mrs. Gresham is gone to see the hounds throw off, I knew she meant to do so one day; but I thought it would have

been too far off for her this morning," remarked she quietly.

"Mrs. Greshem proposed to drive the phaeton back herself. My lord did not seem to think it would be very safe," rejoined Harris, doggedly.

Her young master's wife was no great favorite with her, indeed it was more than whispered among the servants that Mr. and Mrs. Gresham did not agree very well, but that surmise, and many of a like nature, touching their domestic peace, never transpired, even in Lady Stanford's dressing-room, though she heard most things from the faithful creature who had lived with her ever since her marriage, for Harris was something more than a hired servant, in the estimation of the gentle, suffering mistress she had nursed with such devotion for such long, long years. Still Harris had a great deal of tact and discretion, and only repeated those things for her lady-

ship's edification, which were calculated to give her pleasure.

Lord Stanford was more surprised than pleased, when on this occasion he found his daughter-in-law intended to bestow her company upon him, but this made no difference in Florence's determination, she being well aware that he, on his part, was far too polite and courteous to say, or even to testify by look or deed, that he had rather be without her. It cannot be denied that, on second thoughts, and in her secret heart, Lady Stanford rather rejoiced at so opportune an absence.

"Let Mr. Gresham know that I am dressed, and that I shall be glad to see him," said she, when she was at last established on the sofa in her dressing room for the day.

CHAPTER XII.

Oh, my Amy, mine no more!
Oh, the dreary, dreary moorland! Oh, the barren, barren shore!
Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,
Puppet to a parent's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue.

LOCKSLEY HALL.

IT was not long before Lionel made his appearance, in obedience to her summons. A glance at his countenance told his mother that she had been right in her surmise; he had been too much depressed to go out that morning. She felt assured it was more than a mere chance annoyance; his favorite sport in gene-

ral, carried the day over these morbid, melancholy fancies.

He bade her good morning with all his customary affection, exerted himself so far as to make a few common-place remarks, and then relapsed into moody silence. She was thinking how she should open the subject, when he said, hurriedly—

"Mother, I am fit for nothing this morning; I had better leave you, for when I am in this state, I am a burden to myself and to everybody else. I had better fight with my enemy alone."

"Do not go, dear Lionel, come back I entreat!" cried she, for he was already leaving the room.

He hesitated.

"Do not leave me, if you are with me I know the worst," pleaded she. "I cannot follow you, and in your absence, my imagination magnifies the evil. Lionel, you were always patient with me, no other only son was

ever so considerate of his mother s foolish fears."

He came back, he kissed the pale high forehead, where pain, more than time, had set its seal.

"Tell me what is amiss, Lionel; you were not wont to conceal your feelings from me," said she, softly.

"Mother," said he, sorrowfully, "there has been a time when I thought, if I could come home and tell you all, I should be happy; you might blame, but you would sorrow for, and feel with me. Last night I resolved on speaking, but upon reflection, I felt I had better remain silent. It was my own cursed folly—I must not murmur, but meet my fate like a man."

Lady Stanford hardly knew what to say.

"If I can be of any comfort to you Lionel, do not withhold your confidence from me. If your sorrows concerns another besides yourself, it perhaps may be better not to put them into

words," added she, imagining perhaps that Florence might have unthinkingly wounded his quick feelings, and even with all her love for her son, remembering she had no right to interfere between them.

Lionel groaned—

"So be it, mother."

After a time he rose and began pacing up and down the room. Closely as he resembled his mother and her family, he was exactly like his father in many of his peculiarities. Lady Stanford could have fancied that it was her lord's heavy and measured foot-fall, which alone broke the silence, which reigned for nearly half an hour. At last, Lionel spoke.

"Mother, where is Di, how did she take my marriage?" asked he, huskily.

Lady Stanford was literally aghast. She knew not how to frame her reply, but Lionel went on.

"I have never heard her name mentioned since my return; you never said a word about

her in any of your letters. Mother," repeated he, almost fiercely, "have I broken her heart as well as my own."

"Hush, Lionel," said Lady Stanford, reprovingly, "you must not speak so. Your cousin is well, and I believe happy."

"You *believe* happy. Ah! there it is."

"Lionel," said his mother, earnestly, "do not mistake me, "I believe Di to be happy, because I know her principles, I do not think she, for an instant, would sinfully remember, what is better, now, forgotten. Your cousin's nature is too high, too noble, and too pure for her ever to indulge in vain repinings. The love, which was so suddenly extinguished, is now, to her, nothing more than a blotted page in her girlhood's history. Lionel, do not force me to believe that you remember and regret the past."

A burning glow overspread his features, he would not meet his mother's eye, but she read on the countenance, whose every change was

so familiar to her, a strange mingled expression of disappointment and shame, of pain and mortification. At last he said despondingly—

"There is no use denying what is indeed the truth."

"Lionel," said his mother, severely, "you may ignore the fact, but I cannot forget that you are the husband of another woman. You are doing a great injustice to your wife, as well as to your cousin, in speaking thus, but I cannot believe that you really mean all that your words imply, else why should you have married as you did."

It was the first allusion she had ever made to his hasty union.

"If I had had time for reflection, you would not see me the miserable man I am."

"I do not understand you," said Lady Stanford, much moved, "of your own accord you married Miss Russell, and yet you speak as if you still cherished a passion for your cousin. Oh, Lionel, can this be right?"

"Did you think I had forgotten Di? Did you believe I could ever be insensible to the past?" questioned he, vehemently.

"What else could I think?"

He did not answer, but resumed his walk up and down the room.

Lady Stanford lay on her sofa watching him, dreading what might come next, trembling even at the silence which ensued. It was not long before he came up to the foot of her sofa, a strange, troubled look on his face, his lips quivering, while in a hollow tone he said—

"As I have gone so far, mother, I may as well tell you all. You might else, perhaps, think me worse than I am. But no, who can be worse, who can be more wretched!" cried he, passionately.

"Yes, Lionel, speak out of pity to me; out of pity to yourself, tell me what is amiss, speak!" said his mother, vainly striving to repress her agitation.

There was little need to adjure him, it seemed as though he must speak, and urged on by the weight of actual, as well as morbid misery, long borne in silence, worked up to a state bordering on frenzy, by the recurrence of bitter thoughts, till now resolutely put away, impelled by a resistless impulse of remorse, Lionel Gresham launched forth into a detail of both events and feelings, which it grieved his mother's heart to hear.

It was, as they had always believed, he had been hurried into a marriage, lest his parents should interfere. Lord Stanford had, however, supposed that his son had fallen the victim to one of those violent, absorbing passions, which none, not subjugated by their fearful power, can comprehend; which reason cannot justify, nor past precepts modify; a passion, which flings its all at the fatal shrine of the self-created idol, regardless of the past, reckless of the future, and all its withering influences. But this had not been Lionel's

case, and Lady Stanford wept when she heard how her son's youth and inexperience had been betrayed.

Was it for this, that they had so striven to preserve him unspoilt by the world, and by the prosperity to which he had been born? At Eton, Lord Stanford had, on principle, made him rough it, as he had done himself, the son of a poor and harassed man. And far from impressing on him the worldly value of his position in life, they had taught him to think little of rank and riches, or rather to esteem them only as a heavy responsibility, to be used for the good of his fellow-men, not to be abused in wanton waste and luxury. And this was the end of it all! A mere chance, the most commonplace accident had thrown him in the way of Lady Vaughan and her daughter. He had cared so little for society, had felt so little of that vacuity of heart and brain, which makes most people crave for other company than their own thoughts, had been

so much engrossed by scenery, and attracted by the glories of art, to say nothing of an innate love of antiquities, fostered by a most learned tutor, that in the course of these two years, Lionel Gresham had seen little more of the world of men, than he had previously done in the retirement of Sutton Priors.

He had spent the last spring in the Lower Pyrenees, and it was near one of the watering-places in the South of France, that he and his tutor had been tumbled out of one of the rude country carriages together. They had been picked up and carried into an English Miladi's villa hard by.

Lionel was only bruised and stunned, but his tutor had fractured a limb. After a six week's residence under the same roof, Lady Vaughan had thoroughly fathomed the depth of her handsome visitor's unsophisticated character. He was very anxious to get home by his birth-day, and at her suggestion, left his friend, who was slowly progressing towards recovery, to travel home with them *viâ* Paris, whi-

ther they were bound. He had not been there more than a fortnight, during which time, Lady Vaughan had taken care not to let their victim out of their sight, before the long-contemplated plot was brought to bear, upon what she well knew was his most vulnerable point—his honor. It was the old hackneyed story, her daughter's affections won, her reputation endangered by being so constantly seen with him in public, and Lady Vaughan had taken care that they should be perpetually seen together in the most public places. The only marvel was how any one could be found so unworldly, so unsophisticated, and so credulous, as to have been taken in by such a story, to have been so worked on by such a woman. Still it was so, and with streaming eyes, Lady Stanford told herself there was no help for it now.

Lionel had hurried through his story, with a wild and passionate utterance; sometimes seeming to address it to his mother, and sometimes speaking as in a soliloquy; but as he drew to a conclusion, dwelling on feelings,

more than on events, his excitement gradually died away, and he spoke in low, suppressed tones, which thrilled to Lady Stanford's very heart's core.

"Mother, even then I might have borne it; some day I might have been happy, though she could never be to me all that Di was, if Florence had really loved me."

Lady Stanford could believe it, for her son, manly as he was—tall, strong, and Herculean, as he looked—had all the quick impulses, and devoted, clinging, yearning affection of a woman.

"She has a cold manner, but that is no reason that she does not love you at the bottom of her heart; perhaps the more so, that she does not often show it," said she soothingly, and as she looked at her son, she thought, "she cannot but love him, if she has a heart at all."

"No," answered Lionel, in a voice whose very calm gave it tenfold pathos, "that delusion is over. Would to God it had lasted! it only

endured long enough to show me what might have been. No," repeated he, hastily interrupting his mother, who was about to speak, " that hope is as much passed and gone, as the dream which made my boyish days so bright."

There was a world of pity and commiseration in the eyes his mother turned sadly on him.

" After our marriage, we went into Switzerland. It was the same to me where we went, anywhere to escape from myself; thence on to the German Baths, for though Florence does not think it, at that time I had some idea that I ought to be happy, or, at any rate, to try to make my wife so. Then, I still thought that she loved me; and though that love had been the cause of all my misery, yet I fancied it demanded some sort of return, that I could not do enough to give her pleasure. I hoped by kindness to repair the injury, I—judging by my own heart—felt it must be, not to be passionately loved in return.

" At that time we were most anxious about

letters from home; I knew my father would be dreadfully angry, but even I did not believe how long, and how lasting his indignation would prove. Florence—I dreamed not then of the causes that influenced her—was almost as eager as myself, and this was a bond of union, and of sympathy, which, day by day, as I vainly fancied, was drawing us more closely together."

Lady Stanford held out her hand to her son.

"Ah, mother!" said he tenderly, "I always knew that however weak and foolish you might esteem me, you would still love me, you would plead for my forgiveness."

"I did not obtain it, after all, much as I desired it," said Lady Stanford, in a low voice.

"No, it came at a time, when I was so utterly miserable, that the thought I owed my recall to one, who had even more just cause for anger than my father, did not distress me as it does now. My uncle always warned me against being easily led, and yielding to false and hasty

impressions; he little thought that this weakness would be the entire ruin of my own happiness, and the cause of such lasting sorrow to others. He can never know either, how bitterly I have expiated the fault he so nobly pardoned."

After an agitated pause, Lionel went on—

"Lady Vaughan was as desirous as we could be for a reconciliation, and every post brought letters from her on the subject."

"Lady Vaughan knows the world, and the value of standing well with it." sighed Lady Stanford.

"But too well," said Lionel bitterly, and then resumed—

"She always professed to be very fond of me, and save on one occasion," and his brow darkened, "she certainly gave me very excellent advice. All one day, I had been expecting and waiting for letters before writing home. Florence heard from Lady Vaughan, but there were none for me, still as the bags went out early on the morrow, I would not give

up writing altogether, and therefore begged Florence, who had some intimate friends at Baden, to go with them to the Kursaal in the evening. My letters were a good excuse, and I had one of my old fits of despondency, brought on by home sickness and remorse, upon me, which I would, even now, fain conceal from my wife, and still less then, did I wish to darken her life with my sad and miserable forebodings. She came in dressed, and in haste, told me she had forgotten to bring me her mother's letter, but that I had better read it, I should find it on her toilet table up stairs"

When he came to this point, indignation, which he had kept down, passion, he had, as it were, mastered and subdued, seemed to rise again. He covered his face with his hands—he could not bear even his mother to see all the conflicting feelings which swept like a devastating whirlwind across his heart. He spoke in broken sentences, striving, vainly striving, to command his voice.

"I was never meant to see that letter—in her hurry, she had substituted it for the lines destined for my eye—it was in answer to one written by herself, and I had read the half of it before I comprehended its meaning; and yet it was clear enough. She, it appeared, had reproached her mother with having talked her into marriage with a boy husband, whom she never had—never could love. She had upbraided her with the fact, that, with all her manœuvring, she had married her to a man, whose very small income depended on his father, an unrelenting father, who might live for years, and keep her out of the heritage and title, which had been the bait."

"Heartless! cruel, too cruel! my poor boy! my own, own Lionel!" sobbed Lady Stanford.

"Do not pity me, mother; I dare not pity myself, else I should go mad. Listen—Lady Vaughan is not a woman to take reproaches quietly. It is dreadful to think that a mother—that any woman, could have penned the retorts and the advice which that letter con-

tained. Mother and daughter had together planned the scheme, for securing, as they thought, a rich and fitting marriage. The daughter's heart failed her—heart did I say? head, I meant—for heart she had none—at least, for me; for, as I then learnt, her heart, if ever she had one, had been frittered away long before she knew me. It was all rehearsed on those pages, all raked up," repeated Lionel, in a voice of concentrated fury, "to testify how advisable a marriage was with a boy, who would never enquire into antecedents. There had been nothing which, with all her virulence and coarseness, Lady Vaughan could allege as actually wrong, but indiscretions and wild, passionate expressions enough of love for men who treated her as an idle flirt, and hackneyed coquette, to make any man, even the most infatuated, blush to think that he had taken such a woman to his bosom, and given her the sacred name of wife. She did not love me—she never even fancied she loved the husband, who for months had daily and hourly re-

proached himself, for so inadequately returning her affection. She was acting a deliberate falsehood."

There lay the sting! the hollow falseness of his wife's professions of attachment, galled Lionel Gresham's honourable, straightforward nature, more than even the reflection, that he had been drawn into a marriage with the daughter by a designing, artful mother.

What comfort could Lady Stanford offer? All she could and did bestow upon her son was the full measure of sympathy so long denied him, a consolation of which, poor as it is, the strongest and the weakest hearts have alike felt the need.

"If she had really and sincerely loved me, it would not have been so very difficult to forget the past. Heaven only knows what it must have come to, when I feel grateful to my wife, for, at last, professing and acting upon her entire indifference to myself."

Lady Stanford wrung her hands.

"It is a dreadful state of things. Oh! Lionel! can nothing be done?"

He shook his head.

"This cannot, must not last for ever. Could not I speak to Florence—she might, perhaps, listen to me; she must be aware that, as your wife, it is for her own happiness to love you. It cannot be so very difficult."

"The love that is either taught or bought is not worth the having. No, Florence and I perfectly understand each other now; and we must learn to rub on together as scores of other husbands and wives have to do. How few men, or women either," added Lionel, in a tone of would-be resignation, "marry the one being they really love."

"That is but a melancholy view to take of life. What a sad prospect for the future."

"I used to look at life through a dazzling haze of joy," returned her son, as a dreary smile flitted across his careworn face, "so long as I had anything to hope for, and to antici-

pate. Now, my great care is to see things as they really are."

"Beware lest you fall into the contrary extreme, Lionel."

"It is difficult to imagine anything much worse than my position," said he, sadly.

Lady Stanford sighed—she could not contradict him. Throughout this conversation she had sedulously refrained from expressing the angry feelings, the full measure of indignation, she very justly entertained towards her son's treacherous wife; still, whatever her secret sentiments might be, she was his wife, and her first idea was to endeavour to bring about a reconciliation between them. She again expressed something of this desire to Lionel.

"No, mother," said he, firmly, "it is useless; say what you will to me—advise me as you will—tell me whenever you think I am wrong—but do not speak to Florence—promise me that."

Lady Stanford demurred.

"By mutual consent, this subject is dropped

between us for ever; and, believe me, it will be but a thankless office to revive or renew so painful a discussion. I tell you honestly, mother, that, at one time, in the first burst of anger, I was madly bent on a separation. In point of fact, the preliminaries were all but arranged."

In her secret heart, his mother almost wished he had carried out his intention. She had too much regard for principle, nevertheless, to say so; she only asked what had made him change his mind.

"I was in correspondence with Lady Vaughan on the subject; I had written to her asking her to come and take back her daughter."

"Lady Vaughan was not likely to do that," said Lady Stanford, sarcastically.

Lionel shook his head.

"She argued and remonstrated; but I hardly heeded her, till she, at last, resorted to a plea, whose very existence I had not contemplated."

Lady Stanford looked the enquiry she hesitated to make.

"Lady Vaughan said, I was not only casting off my wife, but, perchance, alienating myself and my family from one yet unborn."

An expression of glad surprise rose to Lady Stanford's lips; but, with a gesture, her son checked her.

"Florence has never once opened her lips to me on the subject; and there have been moments since, when I have almost believed—almost wished to believe—that Lady Vaughan had unwittingly deceived both herself and me."

Lady Stanford hardly knew what to say; but Lionel went on without pausing for an answer.

"I was, at that time, so angered with what had gone before, that I fear I was deaf alike to the calls of feeling, and of my own reason; and, I believe, I should almost have persisted in carrying out my first resolution of returning to England alone, had I not fallen in with Douglas. He was going down into Italy with a sick sister, for his broken ankle could not stand the fag of the curacy he had undertake n

"Your father did intend to present him with the living of Bradley," said his mother, willing to divert the subject.

"When it falls, I must try and speak to him about it," returned Lionel. "No fellow ever had a better tutor; and it is hard he should suffer for my fault."

"I always felt it would have been different, had he been with you in Paris," remarked his mother.

"Well, there is no knowing—it might have been so," said Lionel, repressing a sigh; "but, at any rate, he was everything to me at Baden. I was just in that state, that his influence saved me from positive frenzy. There is no use entering on details; but he was a true friend to me. He it was," added he, in lower tones, "who convinced me, that, as I had fallen into error, I must be content to bear its punishment—I had undertaken duties and I must fulfil them. I know not what arguments he used with Florence—for it was he

who acted as mediator between us—but he convinced me that I had no right to abandon my wife. My vows were on me still."

This then was the secret source of the self-command, the forbearance, and the patience, which her once impetuous son had since his residence at home, daily exercised towards his wife. Florence, in her quiet way, was very provoking; but hitherto Lady Stanford had deluded herself into the belief, that her cutting speeches were more coquettish than angry, more especially, as they never seemed to ruffle Lionel's quick, hasty temper. What had before been incomprehensible, was clearly explained now; but even in her grief, she felt a bitter joy in the thought, that her child could so bravely drain the cup of sacrifice. Still when she thought of the bitter words, the longing remembrances, which marked the opening of of her son's confidences, she felt there was something more to be attained. She almost started to hear her own thoughts put into words.

"Do not think me better than I am, because I use Douglas's words, and strive to act up to his suggestions. How far short I fall, let the stormy passions of to-day and yesterday testify. If merely inanimate objects have such fearful power over me, how shall I meet her, whose loss has made happiness a dream, and the future a dreary blank."

It was no new thing for Lady Stanford to counsel, console, and strengthen her son. She had been a beloved and loving wife; but the body's pain had taught her where to seek that healing balm, which alone can cure the deadly sickness of the mind, which had attacked her son. And this, if ever, was a time to speak of those holy influences which possess such wondrous power in conquering regrets, casting out self pity, and driving away vain imaginations.

In these only could he find strength to brave the struggles, and fulfil the duties which every hour must bring to one, for whom life was no more a long and joyous holiday.

CHAPTER XIII.

Her face was fair, but not the one which made
The starlight of his boyhood.

BYRON.

LADY STANFORD used her own discretion in imparting to her lord the substance of Lionel's confessions. She told him enough to make him very considerate of his son's feelings, and more indulgent to him than he had ever been, even in his childhood. He seemed to feel he could not do enough for one, whose prospects of happiness had been so prematurely blighted. With respect to his wife, she was still more cautious, saying not a word, which could by any possibility tend to increase Lord Stanford's growing dislike to his daughter-in-law.

Lady Stanford had, from the first, made it

her duty to treat her son's wife as a daughter. If it had been a hard task once, what was it now? Still, in the only allusion Lionel ever after made to their conversation on the subject of his marriage, he had besought his mother, not only to bear and forbear—that she was ready and willing to do—but, for his sake, to endeavour to win a place in his wife's affections. He had boundless faith in his mother's benign and softening influence over every person who approached her.

What chance she had of success in this endeavour, Lady Stanford never allowed herself to ask. She hardly liked to acknowledge, even to herself, that she had not made one step towards real acquaintance with Florence, beyond the progress on which she had so congratulated herself the first evening of their arrival. She did not know her the least better for having spent weeks beneath the same roof.

Time did not change Mrs. Gresham's manner

in the smallest degree; it was always the same, tranquil, composed, and impassive. She talked on general subjects with all the quiet ease of one who had lived a great deal in society; which, at first, was an inexpressible relief, but it was in vain that during their repeated *tête-à-têtes*, Lady Stanford strove to turn the conversation towards topics of more individual interest. Florence never spoke of her past life, still less of herself; sometimes she would say, on being asked—

"Oh, yes, I know so and so; we made his acquaintance one winter, when we were at Rome," or, "yes, we used to know some of the family, they came to Spa, the autumn we passed there."

But she never gave vent to any of her own thoughts, sentiments, or opinions, save and except when these last concerned the personal appearance of her acquaintance, then she could be severe enough, otherwise Talleyrand himself could not have been more reserved, and

yet at the same time there was a show of openness, which made Lady Stanford think that the constraint which seemed always to hang over their intercourse, and baffled all her attempts at conciliation, must be her own fault. There was no actual coolness, still less was there any cordiality, and for this she blamed herself.

Christmas was coming, and its approach was heralded in by the usual round of country gaieties. Lady Stanford never dined out, her lord but seldom. However, Mr. and Mrs. Gresham were quite overwhelmed with invitations, and as novelties gave considerable satisfaction. Old ladies would toil over in close carriages, on fine afternoons, dressed after a fashion which infinitely diverted the ungrateful Florence, on purpose to congratulate Lady Stanford on her new daughter-in-law; to tell her what an aquisition *she* must find her, how much charmed they had been with her, and to ejaculate over her playing, her dancing, her dress, and her good looks, for Mrs. Gresham

had so much tact that nobody thought of being jealous of her, and she was not too pretty for other women to do themselves much harm by professing a great admiration for her personal appearance.

All were agreed that Lady Stanford had gained a most charming companion; and she would occasionally hear that Mr. Gresham was so much altered, they should hardly have known him, that, had they not been so sure of the date of his birth, they should have fancied him a much older man; and anxious mothers, with happy, volatile, light-hearted sons, thought it must be a great satisfaction that Mr. Gresham had sobered down so early, and had become so steady and quiet. What a comfort it must be for her, that he was happily married and settled at an age, when most young men were sowing their wild oats, and to a person who must exercise so much influence over him.

How little do the world at large guess at the

untold secrets of one sorrowing human heart! How little did any of these good people suspect that tranquil Lady Stanford, aye, and her cold, reserved, saturnine husband would have willingly laid down their own lives, could they have restored their son to freedom, or have called back the wild, untameable, and joyous spirits, which had vanished with his youth.

Lionel, on his part, clung with almost redoubled affection to those, who were all he now had to love; he dreaded the time when, as Lord Stanford had informed him, in one of his earliest letters, he must leave his home and begin life for himself; nothing more had been said about it, but he knew when his father had once made up his mind, he was not likely to change. His wife, however, had, long ere this, wearied of the quiet uniformity, which, to her, was the most painful characteristic of Sutton Priors. They were returning from one of these distant dinners, when she surprized him by saying, suddenly—

"How long do you intend to bury yourself and me in the depths of the country?"

"I have not thought of any plans as yet. I am waiting to hear my father's ultimatum."

"I wish Lord Stanford would make haste. I had no idea a large country house in England could be so *triste*."

"You are not used to the sort of thing," said Lionel, with a vague idea of conciliation.

"Thank goodness! no. When can we go? Mamma has come back to Paris, which she says is gayer than ever; could you not make her an excuse?"

In his secret heart, Lionel thought the less said, at Sutton Priors, about Lady Vaughan, the better.

"I do not see how it can be managed, we have accepted invitations, which must keep us here all the early part of January; and the last week of that month, we usually have a large party for shooting. My father will certainly expect us to remain for that."

"Will they come to stay?" asked Florence, brightening up a little at the prospect of a party.

"Yes, for the week, and we shall have dinner parties every night, to return all these people's civilities. My father so hates company, that he always gets through all necessary hospitalities to his neighbours on these sort of occasions."

"Who will be asked to stay?"

"The same party come every year, they are, most of them, contemporaries of my father."

"How dreadfully dull!"

"The Duke of ——, Lord ——, and Sir ——, are not generally considered dull."

"Are they really coming?" exclaimed Florence, not a little struck at hearing names, which had made a little noise in the world, enunciated so tranquilly. "They are celebrities, at all events, whom it is something to be able to say, hereafter, one knows."

Lionel was pleased.

"Are none of your friends invited?" proceeded she, "these are all very grand, but who am I to amuse myself with?"

"Frank Gresham, I rather think, will come," answered Lionel suppressing a sigh, and purposely ignoring the latter part of her sentence.

"Frank Gresham. He is your cousin, consequently mine also, so much the better, every body knows that is a most convenient relationship. Besides, he is in the Guards, and must, therefore, have some little experience in the ways of this wicked world. It is to be hoped I shall not be disappointed in him."

This speech cut every way; Lionel did not answer, he was too much annoyed.

"By-the-way," resumed Florence, who having been made a good deal of, at her dinner party, was more disposed to be conversable with her husband than usual, "is there any coolness between your family and all that branch of the Greshams? I have observed

that their names are seldom mentioned without some degree of *reticence.* Lord and Lady Stanford invariably turn the conversation whenever I begin to ask about them."

"No, I do not believe my father and the Dean have ever had a difference in the whole course of their lives," said Lionel, evasively.

"Are Lady Stanford and the Deaneress good friends?" asked Florence, who was rather aggrieved by being, at times, called, by the servants, "Mrs. Lionel," they having been long accustomed to a very different Mrs. Gresham.

"Perfectly so," returned Lionel, who was on thorns lest she should stumble on the truth. He felt that now, if ever, was the time to speak of his early attachment to his cousin. He was aware that it would be far better that Florence should hear of it from himself, than become acquainted with the circumstance from common report, or worse still, when the inevitable time came, when she must

see and hear more of such near relations, run the risk of her inadvertently saying or doing something which might lead them to believe that he thought lightly of the past, or entirely disregarded their feelings. It was but another instance of the inherent weakness of his character—his only fault. He knew what he ought to do, but he could not resolve on doing it; so he appeased his conscience by the reflection that his wife knew little, and cared less for any of his feelings. She would only laugh at the intense and romantic passion of his life, as she did at his devotion to his mother.

"Somebody said Miss Gresham was very handsome," remarked she.

"Most people consider her so," said Lionel, bighting his lip, a sign of emotion, which, in the darkness, passed unperceived by Florence.

"And she is going to be married?"

"Who told you so?" demanded Lionel, thunderstruck; but the next moment he recol-

lected himself, and added, in slow and measured tones, "I have heard nothing of it."

"How disagreeable and snappish you are, to-night! You can hardly give one a civil answer, or, indeed, answer at all."

"You rather surprise me by your intelligence," replied Lionel, in a frigid tone of courtesy, the only manner in which he ever testified his consciousness of his wife's sneers.

"You know as much about the matter as I do," rejoined she, pettishly, "you were in the room when Lord Stanford read the letter."

"Oh!" said Lionel, relieved, "that allusion was made with regard to Mildred, my uncle's second daughter; it is by no means a settled thing, seeing that her father's judgment is at variance with her inclinations."

"She will run away, if she has any sense."

"I think not," said Lionel, tranquilly, who made it a rule never to argue with his wife.

"How well I know the meaning of that

tone," retorted she, still out of humour; "you might as well say at once, my cousin is a paragon of virtue, the very reverse of yourself. I only wonder you did not marry her," added she.

"Milly was a child when last I saw her, and, though no paragon of perfection, she was a warm-hearted and affectionate little girl."

"In plain English, a little goose. Is her sister of the same delightful stamp?"

"They are not the least alike; no one would ever think of comparing them," answered Lionel, steeling himself to endure, as best he might, this mental rack."

His wife persevered; she had an intuitive perception he was vexed, so she went on with her catechism.

"You preferred the elder sister?"

"Yes." Then he added, hesitatingly, hardly knowing what to say, "Her's is a style of beauty I much admire."

"Indeed! tell me what she is like?"

"Tall and fair, like Sir Peter Lely's picture of the first Lady Stanford, which hangs in the breakfast-room."

"The beauty with the bright, waving hair, brilliant complexion, and dark eyebrows and eyelashes?"

He assented.

"How flattered I ought to be by your admiration of your cousin," said she, half angrily and half in jest. "But tell me, what sort of girl is she?" proceeded Florence, whose conversation, when she had no particular end in view, generally consisted of endless questions.

"People call her very clever."

"Accomplished, I suppose; plays and sings, and so forth."

"I never heard her sing, but I think she can play."

"How like a man, not to know. What, if I may ask the question, made you like her?"

Lionel started; for one moment he fancied

Florence had divined his thoughts, the next he smiled sadly at his own folly. "Conscience makes cowards of us all," thought he. By this time he had determined to persist in his reserve, but it was difficult to frame a reply, which would not imply either too little or too much.

"We were a great deal together as children; she and Frank were nearest to me in age."

"I think I shall make friends with her," said Florence, condescendingly, as the carriage stopped. "I begin to want some one to exchange ideas with. I should not wonder either, if I were to find the brother as much in my style as the sister is in yours. If so, he will be a great resource in this out-of-the-way place, and his coming worth anticipating."

Lionel did not answer, but she was not surprised, being well aware he entertained some, what she called "old world notions," on the score of the duties he thought married people owed to each other. These principles it was

her delight to scout and ridicule, else she had not so openly professed her intention of "amusing herself" with his cousin Frank.

Strange to say, with all her wit and worldly wisdom, Florence never for an instant suspected her husband's secret. Had she loved him, as most women must have done, she would hardly have failed to discover it by intuition. The very power of her love must have taught her where his was wanting.

Long before this Lady Stanford would fain have persuaded her son, that perfect confidence was a far surer basis for happiness, than the mutual avoidance of disagreeable topics, on which he depended for peace. And, in some measure, she judged rightly. Florence was not a person to win confidence—she was too selfish, and, at the same time, too distrustful of others, but she would hardly have betrayed it. She had been badly brought up, without the smallest reference to either religion or principle, and had been barely taught even to respect the very inde-

finite distinctions between right and wrong, which mere worldly wisdom draws and inculcates; while the sentiments she had heard upheld from her childhood, had dimmed her perceptions of the beauty of a true woman's character, and robbed of their freshness feelings, which, fortunately perhaps for her, considering whose daughter she was, had never been very acute.

Vanity and love of admiration had, far more than passion, or deep, misguided sentiment, been her mother's bane, and, to a certain extent, Florence's also; and the violence of temper, which had with years increased upon Lady Vaughan, had in her daughter been subdued into a defiant, sullen, resentful, and relentless frame of mind. It was this which threatened to deprive her husband of the small store of happiness which yet remained to him.

Nevertheless, a simple explanation of facts, to say nothing of feelings, on Lionel's part, might have done away with some portion of

that bitterness with which Florence regarded her husband, for his evident unhappiness, his constantly recurring fits of depression—nay, the very measured patience with which he bore her acts of aggression, far from softening, actually irritated her against him, for no other reason than because she fancied they were all attributable to herself.

But what rendered her positively inimical towards Lionel was the certainty of how low she must have sunk in his estimation, when by her mother's letter he had been made aware of the part she had herself played in entrapping him into marriage. She felt herself more degraded by his knowledge of that circumstance, and of the deceit to which she had lent herself, than by the act itself. So much for early education.

From that moment she cast off the semblance of affection, which, up to this period, she had sedulously maintained. She had never really cared for him; but she, since then, had gradu-

ally worked herself up to a state of feeling bordering on actual dislike and aversion. She knew nothing of the holy sanctity of the tie of marriage, and how should she, considering the people she had lived with from childhood? Nor were the French novels, which were the only books she cared to read, likely to impart more just views of its duties. Thanks to their teaching, and after the fashion of her favourite heroines, she soon came to look on herself as a victim sacrificed to a husband who was incapable of understanding her feelings; and who had neither heart nor soul to be stirred by the passion of love.

Since their residence in England, she had found this was a mistake. External circumstances had no small share in raising her opinion of the boy-husband she had brought herself to despise. The daughter of needy, extravagant parents, she was quite capable of estimating the very different position held by her husband and his family. She had

learned to respect him; and, just at this juncture, anything which could have raised her in her own estimation, and have toned down her warring feelings, might possibly have given a very different colouring to the future lives of this ill-assorted pair.

And for himself, might not Lionel have seen something of his own danger in the very reluctance he felt to speak of a love, over which, deeming it past, he too often mused, on which, with regret, he too often dwelt?

CHAPTER XIV.

The Christmas fire blazed on the hearth,
Rolling its liquid waves of yellow light
Upon the coloured pattern of the wall,
As if the flame amused itself in sport
With its companions of old winter eves.

THE PARISH.

Within those sacred walls I knelt a newly wedded wife,
With girlhood's smiles yet lingering, and hope still charming life;
The old familiar faces! that looked good-bye with pain,
May never gaze on my changed brow, nor I on their's again.

E. A. M. W.

No one who knew Dr. Gresham would have accused him of harbouring feelings of either discontent or despondency; but the first day of

Christmastide, which saw all his children gathered round the fire after dinner, did not, to him, bring with it the jocund mirth of other days.

There was glee enough among the younger fry. Master Bob, it is true, kept up the dignity of his sex—for sons were a scarce and valuable commodity in the Gresham family—and the respect due to a Westminster boy, to the best of his ability; and only spoke to those whose age justified the fond belief that they could comprehend his metaphysics; but his three younger sisters were in the most hilarious state of excitement; and Georgie, in particular, the youngest and the prodigy, was sitting on Frank's knee, coquetting with him, and chattering at the top of her shrill little voice.

The Dean could not help looking back, with regret, to the time when his elder children had rejoiced in the same careless gaiety of heart. Few Christmases had come and gone, since they too had made the walls and roof ring with the same

light-hearted, childish laughter. In those days he had often felt anxious about their future, but his fears had since then assumed a different form and aspect. At that time the want of money to start his sons in life, and the difficulty of providing for his numerous daughters had been acutely felt. Now these cares had been removed, only for others to take their place—others too which he was utterly powerless to remedy or guard against. In higher hands he must leave the working out of his children's destiny.

Frank was, it is true, placed by adventitious circumstances in what most people would have considered a most satisfactory position. He had begun his career, as a gay guardsman, under the best auspices—thanks to Miss Courtenay; and yet, in the great world, he had not, as the Dean sometimes feared he would, learnt to despise his home, or to look down upon the simplicity of his father's old-fashioned habits.

He had come back to them unspoiled by the

prosperity which was his lot; and Dr. Gresham had almost ceased to regret that his son had not chosen the learned profession for which his talents fitted, and his education had prepared him. He did not despair; Frank's was a butterfly's life now, with all the charms of novelty and independence, but he had that in him, which might yet lead to higher ends and aims; he would not always be content with his present limited sphere of action. And the Dean went off into a waking dream, touching the political career, which was his most cherished vision of worldly ambition for his son.

The present was more important than the future, and a heavy sigh escaped Dr. Gresham, as he looked on the other side of the fire, towards his two grown-up daughters — and Milly must be considered grown-up now, for ere long she would be numbered among the matrons of the land. Her face wore a far different aspect than it did when last we saw it. Smiles and blushes were now contending for

the mastery; she was happy at last—quietly happy; for she seemed to think it bliss enough to have her lover by her side; and a fresh rosy breath of life passed over her countenance every time he spoke or looked towards her, which, it must be confessed, was often enough, for Captain Glenny seemed to have eyes and ears for no one else.

It was the first day of their reunion. The one cloud which had, for a brief period, darkened Mildred Gresham's young life, had passed over her gentle head, only to bring a brighter, happier dawn. Little she recked of the coming storms or troubled days yet garnered in the iron hand of time.

The Dean would have given much, had he shared his little daughter's untroubled, perfect faith. He had, at last, granted his consent to her marriage with Captain Glenny, simply because he could give no good reason for withholding it. He had enquired into the character of his future son-in-law, and even made

the acquaintance of his parents. There was much in the first that he did not like, but nothing to take hold of; his father was a highly respectable, business-like man; his mother wanting in refinement; but as Frank remarked to Di, as they travelled home in company that very morning—

"Milly need not marry all the family."

Captain Glenny had been a most persevering suitor. Whether there was any leaven of obstinacy mingled with his affection, we need not pause to enquire; and the less said about the self-love, which could not brook the mortification of a rejection, the better. In the moment of action, deeds, not motives, are, perforce, accepted even by the wisest and best of men, as the tests of character, and, in some respects, Captain Glenny had shone. He had been most liberal in settling all he had, and all he was ever likely to have on his future wife. And he made, what, in the Dean's eyes, was an immense concession in selling out of

So, at last, Doctor Gresham gave
.. nen at Hampton Court months before,
. had talked of taking a middle course and postponing the marriage a year or two, had not Di said—

"Anything better than a long engagement."

Doctor Gresham's heart softened towards his eldest daughter, as he marked what a change the last few months had wrought on that radiant face. There was no look of ill health; Di was not wan or worn; the roses had not faded from her cheek; there were no wrinkles on the smooth, open brow. The change lay in the expression. Sorrow had passed by there, and left its shadow,

"Conquer'd passion, long past care."

It was sad to see how old the girlish heart had grown, to read it in the expression of the firmly compressed lips, in eyes, whose joyous

the acquaintance of his parents. There was much in the first that he did not like, but nothing to take hold of; his father was a highly respectable, business-like man; his mother wanting in refinement; but as Frank remarked to Di, as they travelled home in company that very morning—

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light had been replaced by a serene and softened melancholy. The character of the face was earnest, as of old, but the dream-like, musing look was gone, and in its stead reigned that angelic calm, that tranquil resignation, and perfect peace, so rarely seen in early youth, because, happily, in the very young, hope generally predominates over sorrow, the future over the present—so seldom seen at all, because we are so prone to struggle with destiny, to fight against the inevitable.

It was the soul's dominion over the body, that now made Diana Gresham's countenance positively beautiful; which, to the discerning, spoke of self-conquest, although, by others mistaken for coldness, pride, and reserve. The Dean saw it all, he appreciated the struggle, he knew the cost of the victory; but it saddened him to think that, before she was twenty, the bloom of his favourite daughter's youth had been rudely brushed away.

"Di," said her brother, drily, one day about a fortnight after their return, "what do you think of your new brother?"

"Brother-in-law, you mean."

"It's all the same."

"Not quite," replied she, with a meaning smile; "for I do not feel the least intimate with Captain Glenny."

"Consequently, you prefer quibbling at the supposed relationship to answering a direct question," said he, gaily.

"Yours was such a very comprehensive enquiry," returned his sister.

"Well, it does not appear I am to have the benefit of your opinion, so I may as well tell you at once that I am beginning to believe that our good aunt was not far wrong when she said, "no good would come of this marriage."

"Oh, Frank, pray don't say so. Milly is always congratulating herself upon your liking Captain Glenny so much."

"Is she? I don't think the Captain is particularly fond of me."

"Then he ought to be," answered Di, indignantly, "for I do not think papa would ever have consented to the marriage, if you had not persuaded him."

"I am sorry I ever said a word to him about it," said Frank, gravely; "I should have done better if I had let things take their course, but Milly was so urgent with me that I could not resist her entreaties."

"What makes you fancy Captain Glenny does not like you?" said Diana, after a pause.

"Intuition. He has always mistrusted me from the moment Milly let out that I knew all about that running away business. A man may do a shabby thing, but he does not like to be caught out in it."

"I have never had any confidence in Captain Glenny since," said Diana, gravely.

"I know you have not, and I believe it would have been better, if, as you wished, my

father had been made acquainted with the circumstances which came to my knowledge. Milly could not have been expected to tell. I ought to have done so at once."

"It is too late now," returned Diana, who could never bear to hear her brother blame himself; "besides, it really would have broken poor Milly's heart, if papa had refused his consent."

"I am much mistaken if Glenny does not break her heart yet."

His sister looked up aghast.

"He is on his best behaviour now, and he is very much in love into the bargain," continued Frank, "but at heart he is a regular bashaw, and when the first charm of novelty is over, and he has got her all to himself, depend on it, he will be a regular domestic tyrant."

"But Milly is so gentle and yielding, she has no will but his," pleaded Diana.

"So much the worse for her, for he is just the man to take advantage of it. He rules her

already with a rod of iron, only she does not know it."

"It is to be hoped, that she may long remain in happy ignorance," sighed Diana.

"My father does not like him," remarked Frank, after poking the fire vehemently; "I can see it in the restraint he is constantly obliged to put on himself. The fellow has no tact, and invariably says the wrong thing."

"I have seen papa wince more than once," replied Diana; "but he was more annoyed than I have ever known him at Captain Glenny's staying away from the Cathedral that first Sunday morning."

"He will not do it again here, at any rate," said Frank, "for he did not like my father's speaking to him about it. I fancy he does not often set foot within a church. Whatever induced Milly to take a fancy to a man who has not one single thought, principle, or

opinion, in common with herself or her family, I cannot think."

"Because she is so good and innocent herself, that she never dreams of harm in others," was Diana's prompt reply.

"Ah! that's it; or half the men in the world would not get wives so infinitely too good for them. Women are so much too ready to take things on trust." And Frank walked whistling out of the room, as was his custom when he was vexed.

Nobody else put their fears into words, or stated their mistrust so openly, but Frank's sentiments were more or less shared by all those members of the family who had arrived at years of discretion. Mrs. Gresham, who for a time had been carried away by the delight of having a daughter on the point of matrimony, and by the excitement of getting her *trousseau*, as the period drew near, which was to separate her from her first-born, could hardly keep up

a semblance of resignation, still less of satisfaction.

Happily for all parties, Captain Glenny did not spend much of his time at the Deanery. In the month he passed with them at Christmas, he had found out that he did not like his future wife's family. He had exchanged into a regiment of the line, preparatory to selling out altogether; and he was not very sorry to find himself obliged to pass the interim at the depôt of his corps, some three hundred miles away. Milly had not seen him for two months, till the evening before the day fixed for the wedding.

Captain Glenny had been very anxious the marriage should take place at Sutton. In his secret heart, he thought a good deal of the connection he was forming; and he would have liked those members of his family, who were to be present at the ceremony, to have seen with their own eyes the grandeur of Sutton Priors. He had gone there himself with Frank, the last week in January, to be intro-

duced to Lord and Lady Stanford, and to have a week's pheasant shooting, and had been very much impressed with the size of the house, the number of servants, and the extent of the estate; to say nothing of divers trivialities, which, though they make no impression on those who have been accustomed to them from childhood, assume a vast importance in the eyes of those to whom they are novelties.

He would not have been flattered if he had known how much Frank disliked the office of bear leader; indeed it is doubtful if that young gentleman would have brought himself to undertake it, had he not been dreadfully sensitive touching a meeting with his cousin Lionel. The Dean would not hear of his son's absenting himself altogether from his uncle's house, he adjured him for his sister's sake, not to show any sensitiveness on the subject, and so it came to pass, that Frank accepted Captain Glenny's company, thinking the presence of a stranger would take off something of the

awkwardness of the first rencontre with Lionel and his wife.

From that moment Captain Glenny was bent upon being married at Sutton, and on first thoughts, Mildred had wished it also, from very different reasons it is true. She looked upon Sutton as her home, and she would gladly have been united to the husband of her choice within the time-hallowed edifice, where she had been made a partaker of all the ordinances of the Christian religion. Her first wish had hardly found utterance, ere she thought of her sister, and, for the first time, she expressed and persisted in an opinion at variance with that of her lover.

Captain Glenny tried cajolery, raillery, and finally grew very angry with her; but though he could make Milly unhappy, he could not move the Dean. He stood firm; even Diana, though she tried her influence—for the one thing she could not endure was the most dis-

tant supposition of regretting the past—failed in inducing him to yield.

"The marriage must take place at C——," Dr. Gresham said, "or not at all."

It was, perhaps, the indefinite hope—that indefinite hope, which we have all vainly cherished at one time or another of our lives—that something would avert an union, which every day grew more and more distasteful to their feelings, which prompted the Dean and Mrs. Gresham to put off the wedding-day, from week to week, and month to month.

At last, in April, everything was definitely arranged. Milly was to be married on her seventeenth birthday.

> The month
> Of sunshine and of showers,
> Of balmy breezes, opening flowers.

might have vouchsafed a fine day to so fair and young a bride. But if ever weather were in accordance with the feelings of the many, it

was on the day on which Mildred Gresham left her father's house.

The Dean had tapped his barometer, and reckoned on the new moon during a fortnight's prevalence of east wind and frost; but all to no purpose. The sharp piercing cold of the preceeding weeks was "softened," as the French have it; but when Diana rose and looked forth from her window, the flat grassy fields, which were the sole prospect the Deanery commanded, were covered thick with snow, while the laden clouds, which hung so close to earth, and fast falling flakes gave no promise of any ray of sunshine.

It is strange what power petty vexations, and mere trifles possess in diverting the mind from real sorrows. Mrs. Gresham, who had passed her night in tears, dried her eyes to worry herself about Milly's having to walk on such a snowy, blustering day, up the narrow entry, under the wall of the Bishop's Palace, and all along the cold drafty cloisters, into

the cathedral, with nothing warmer on her head than a lace-veil, Lady Stanford's costly gift.

Never was there a bride, to whom the paraphernalia of a wedding was of so little importance, or who was so perfectly passive in the hands of her attendants. She did not even look at herself in the glass till she was reminded of the necessity of doing so, after Diana had adjusted her wreath of orange-flowers, and myrtles. Milly had but one anxiety, and that was to keep herself from tears. Captain Glenny had told her he should take it as a bad compliment to himself if she went.

Morning prayers in the cathedral were at ten, and at Milly's particular request, they were to form the prelude to the marriage service, and Captain Glenny, though his mother and sister thought it most ridiculous and Tractarian, did not choose to thwart her; and these, his relations, stood too much in awe of the Dean, to say

nothing of Lord Stanford or Miss Gresham, to venture to broach the subject to them.

Her own mother was the person, who almost upset Milly's nerves. Just as she was dressed and ready, Mrs. Gresham, who had never been still since dawn of day, bustled in.

"My dear love, I do think you had better give up morning prayers; that would allow of nearly an hour's delay, and the weather might possibly clear a little in that time."

"Mamma," said Milly tremulously, "do let me go, I do not mind the weather; I want to hear papa read for the last time. You know he is not——"

It was the longest sentence she had got through that morning, and now she could not finish it, but turned appealingly to Diana.

Diana knew that she wished to say that her father was not to perform the ceremony, and took upon herself the burden of the argument. Her opinion had a good deal of weight with her step-mother, but she would hardly have gained

the victory, had not the Dean appeared to lead his little daughter down stairs, and to announce that there was a lull in the storm, of which they had better take advantage, as they had full a hundred yards to walk before they got under shelter.

Across the sweep, over the public road, and up the narrow stone-passage that led into the very precincts of the cathedral, the path had been swept, and sack-cloth laid down. As the brides maids were gathering in the hall to walk in procession after the bride, Frank pointed it out to Diana.

"I would wear it, and ashes all my life, if my father had been told all we know, Di."

A suffocating feeling in her throat, choked the reply that rose to her lips, and Diana did not look up again lest she should betray her emotion; till as they were sitting in the narrow deanery pew, Milly pressed her hand to call her attention to her favorite voluntary, whose glorious notes burst forth, as the Bishop and her

father, the clergy, and white robed choristers passed from beneath the shade of the dark curtain, and walked in procession up the chancel.

The faltering of her father's voice, so resolutely subdued, filled Di's eyes with tears; but the holy words of prayer, to her surprise, calmed Milly's previously uncertain spirits. Diana knelt down, and stood up mechanically, but Milly, when the ordinary service ended, was serene, tranquil, and happy as a child. Captain Glenny, who despised all emotion, and contemned tears as the sign of woman's weakness and inferiority, was the most nervous of the two, when they knelt before the altar.

An hour later, and pale as death, her very lips bloodless, but with dry eyes, for she would not stain her bridal day with tears, Milly hurried into her father's study. She laid her soft cheek against his, she could not trust herself to speak, but the wild, passionate clinging of her arms around his neck, was more affecting

than any words of farewell. For the first time in her life Diana saw her father weep.

In low and broken tones, he bade Mildred never forget her home, or all its early teaching. He tried to speak cheerfully and hopefully, of the life and prospects opening before her, but the words died on his lips. He could only press her to his heart and pray to God to bless and keep her.

They never met again this side the grave.

END OF VOL. I.